

# *The History of Northolt Village*

Archaeologists believe they can prove that this area was inhabited as far back as 700 BC, although it is not until 962 AD that we have documented evidence.

The first thing we should be aware of is the landscape of Northolt, as it has played a very important part in its history. It is a very flat area, except for the ridge on which the Church and Manor House site are. The ground is made up of a thin layer of topsoil on a very thick layer of clay, which was the major reason why Northolt was bypassed by the rest of the world, right up until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, at which time there were just over 100 residents in Northolt.

We will start with the Prehistoric period,

## **The Prehistoric and Roman Periods**

The Northolt area was certainly an occupied landscape in the late prehistoric and Romano-British periods, but the evidence is scattered. It was mostly an undulating landscape, typical of the London Clay area, but rising to a ridge at the manor house site, and to Horsendon Hill to the east. Numerous small streams drained the land towards the River Brent to the south-east.

Archaeologists have found evidence that people were living here in the Iron Age (around 700 BC). They settled on the ridge because it was better drained than the wet clay lands at the bottom of the slope. Archaeologists working on the site of the manor house and in Belvue Park have found pottery of the period and some pieces of flint. It was probably a small hamlet surrounded by a simple ditch to keep the cattle in. The houses would have been of the large round-house type. There were also farms on the lower ground at Downe Barns and near Rectory Park, in the first to the third century AD. The farms were then abandoned because of flooding from the streams. You will learn that flooding is synonymous with Northolt!

Pottery was found during the excavation of the Northolt manor house site. This has been identified as late Bronze Age to early Iron Age, with some Romano-British fragments. Trial trenches in Belvue Park found one struck flint at the north edge of the Park to the south of Deynte's Cottage. In another trench, close to the highest part of the Park and directly south of the Church, a pit was found which contained fifteen fragments of Iron Age pottery and two pieces of Roman roof-tile. This evidence suggests that there was late Iron Age or Romano-British occupation near the top of the clay ridge, but nothing is known of its character.

Other Roman finds include pieces of tile and brick, built into the walls of the mid 14<sup>th</sup>-century manor house. As little Roman pottery was found on the site, these building materials were probably imported from a ruined Roman building on another site, such as Downe Barns or Medlar Farm. In 1951 Roman pottery was found at Downe Barns, and in 1968 at Rectory Park, Roman ditches, pits and post-holes were also found.

It would appear that even the Romans did not wish to visit Northolt! The nearest Roman road was the London to Silchester Road which passed through Brentford. The main reason for this was the state of Northolt's roads, muddy and impassable in winter.

A roadway to the west, which still partly exists today and we know as Sharvel Lane, is thought to have been a prehistoric track way running along the ridge. It continued to be used through Brentford. It is therefore not an area where there were likely to be Roman villas. Evidence for two Romano-British farmsteads has been found within Northolt. At Downe Barns in 1951 Roman pottery was found on the site of a moated manor, and scattered over the fields stretching westwards to Yeading Brook. At Medlar Farm on the western edge of Rectory Fields in 1968, Roman ditches, pits and post-holes were found. Both sites were probably small farmsteads. On neither site were the farm buildings located. The Medlar Farm site may have been abandoned in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century because of flooding, which deposited a deep layer of silt.

### **The Saxon Period**

There were fewer people living in Northolt in early Saxon times than there had been in the Roman period, but by the late 600s they were certainly still living on the ridge where the church and the manor house later stood. We don't know exactly where their houses were, as we have only found their graves. Archaeologists working on the manor house site found three graves, with beads, bronze rings, combs and knives lying next to the skeletons, showing that these people were not Christians, but pagans. There must have been many more graves, grouped in a cemetery, but these were destroyed when the medieval moats were dug. Burials of this time are rarely found in Greater London, although ten graves were found at Hanwell with weapons and broaches dating between 400 and 500 AD.

Later in the Saxon period in the 800s, there was a change in the pattern of where people lived. Wood and clay houses were built over the earlier graves and surrounded by an earth bank, probably with a stockade on the top. This would have kept the cattle safe, and allowed them to go down to drink at the stream on the west side. The largest building was the hall of the local lord, and by the end of the Saxon period there was also a Christian church. This was the origin of Northolt village. There may have been a similar bank and stockade enclosure on the other side of the stream, where the Crown Inn now stands.

Some of the people lived beyond the main village in outlying hamlets at Wood End, Iliots Green, Downe Barns, West End, and Gosling's End. At this time Northolt was part of a large estate which also included Greenford, Perivale, Hayes, Norwood and Southall, and bordered the River Brent to the south-east. Each of these villages had its own system of large open fields for growing crops. These were laid out before the parish boundaries were fixed between the villages.

This system of large open fields was to remain partly in use until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. There were four fields in Northolt called Great Field, Batsey Field, Tunlow Field and Mill Post Field, of which Great Field was by far the largest. The name Tunlow Field, at the south end of Northolt parish, means village mound.

Each field was divided into a series of long strips for ploughing, which would have given a striped appearance to the landscape as viewed from the top of Belvue Park. The strips were called *lands*, and grouped in rectangular furlongs called *shots*, angled to give the best drainage of the heavy clay soil. At the ends of the furlongs were turning spaces for the ploughs, called *headlands*. Repeated ploughing made the strips into long curving shapes. There were no hedges or fences between them, but drainage ditches surrounded each field. It was vital to keep them running clear to avoid flooding.

Land is known to have been granted by charters at Greenford and Roxeth in 845. Greenford was then called *Grenan forda*, referring to a ford across the River Brent. The earliest surviving documentary evidence for Northolt is a mention in a narrative of c962, referring back to events of c950, when Wulfgar was the lord of the place called *Nordhealum*, and living in its hall. The medieval form of the place-name was generally written *Northall*, suggesting a contrast to Southall, perhaps because both were elements in a larger estate. The word “hall” had a different meaning than today; a ridge, a nook or an enclosure rather than a built hall. Wulfgar was followed in 960 by ‘Tosig the Proud’, Sheriff of London and Middlesex. He was followed by his son Athelston and in turn by his son Ansgar the Staller who, as Sheriff of London, led the City Troops into battle at Senlac. And as history shows we changed from being ruled by the Saxons to being ruled by the Normans.

At the time of the *Domesday Book* survey in 1086, the name of Northolt had become Latinised to *Northala*, and there were twenty-two peasant families in Northolt, besides three cottagers, six slaves and the priest. They used eight ploughs on the open fields, each pulled by eight oxen. At the end of the middle ages the numbers of tenants and ploughs, and the range of crops grown, probably remained much the same.

### **The Medieval Period**

After the Norman Conquest the manor of Northolt was given to Geoffrey de Mandeville. It remained in the hands of the Mandevilles until the 13<sup>th</sup> century, except for a short period in 1217 when Henry III took the estate as forfeit.

The early medieval settlement of Northolt continued directly from its late Saxon predecessor on the end of the clay ridge, and expanded gradually to the north-east. It is not known what position the contemporary manor house occupied in the settlement, but it is likely to have been close to the church.

The Church formed part of the endowment of the priory of Walden in Essex, founded by Geoffrey de Mandeville in about 1140. Walden continued to hold its rights to Northolt until some time between 1241 and 1251 when the prior’s claims were disputed by the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul’s. The matter was referred to Peter de Newport, Archdeacon of London and it was agreed that a vicarage should be instituted and the patronage vested in the Bishop of London and his successors, although there was said to be no Vicarage in 1247 and the exact date of its ordination is unknown. Vicars of Northolt were to pay 12 marks annually towards the maintenance of St. Paul’s Cathedral.

According to an early 15<sup>th</sup> century source, the Vicarage was ordained in 1388 but since the recorded Vicars date from the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, the document referred to is almost certainly the confirmation of an earlier ordinance.

The Abbot of Walden received 2 marks from the profits of the benefice, which were valued, in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, at 12 marks, and the Prior of Hurley in Berkshire half a mark. In 1291 the Church was valued at £5; the Prior of Hurley still received his annual pension but no payment to the Abbot is recorded.

In 1302 the vicar of Northolt was included in a list of Middlesex incumbents excommunicated for non-payment of the papal tenth!

After the de Mandevilles it passed, first to the d'Eu family and then to the Botelers, who continued to hold the manor until 1370. The Botelers built a stone manor house surrounded by a moat in the late 13<sup>th</sup> or early 14<sup>th</sup> century, over the site of the late Saxon and early medieval settlement of Northolt. This required the removal of about twenty households to another location. (compulsory purchase and re-location 13<sup>th</sup> century stile. Is nothing new!) They were placed in a planned village grouped around a long rectangular village green running north-south along the stream valley. The adjacent church was largely rebuilt at the same time, and extended in the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1370 the lady of Northolt manor had caused two acres of ground to be dug for marl and clay for sale. It is not clear if this was to spread on the fields for agricultural improvement, or as the raw material for tiles and bricks. She had also ordered the cutting of **200 mature oak-trees, 2,000 young oak-trees, six ash-trees, ten pear-trees and eight apple-trees**. This probably involved the destruction of managed woodland at Wood End, and orchards near the manor house. Who said asset stripping was a 20<sup>th</sup> century invention! Can you just imagine 200 mature oak trees!

Nicholas Bramble took over in 1370, but in 1388 he managed to upset the Monarch, and was executed for treason. King Richard II acquired the manor in the late 1390s and he used it as part of an endowment to Westminster Abbey in 1399, to support the upkeep of his tomb. The manor house complex was rebuilt twice in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, on a larger scale within a new moat, but demolished when Westminster Abbey acquired it.

In the late medieval period there were about thirty households in Northolt village and its hamlets. Records of 1335 show that the parish was expected to contribute thirty footmen and three officers to the muster of the county militia. The hamlet of Downe Barns became deserted in the late medieval period, probably because of population decline following the Black Death and other 14<sup>th</sup>-century plagues. There were buildings on the site of Smith's Farm by 1338, when John Andrew lived there, in the area of pastures called White Lease. Medlar Farm, at the corner of Church Road and Ruislip Road to the west of Rectory Park was established at about the same time.

From Northolt village roads ran north-eastwards to Wood End (Wood End Lane), north-westwards to Iliots Green (now Eastcote Lane), south-westwards to West End and Hayes (Church Road), and southwards to Goslings End (Ealing Road, now Kensington Road). Longer distance routes by-passed the main village. Sharvel Lane

ran from Uxbridge to Harrow through Downe Barns on the north-western side of the parish. Ruislip Road ran from Ealing to Ruislip through Goslings End, West End, and the south part of Northolt and Greenford parishes. Gravel pits were dug in Greenford to provide materials for the repair of these roads.

One reason for the longer distant roads by-passing Northolt was probably that, due to the clay and the lack of maintenance to the roads, the village often became impassable during the winter months. Times don't change do they!

Immediately south of the churchyard and the green was the demesne pasture of Berry Close. On its east side was Dovehouse Close, presumably the site of the manorial dovecote. Berry Close had a wet ditch on its south boundary with Oldbury or Catton Mead which needed scouring out in 1497 and was blocked in 1503. Catton Mead, presumably named after the 14<sup>th</sup>-century tenant Roger de Catton, was a meadow, now at the lower end of Belvue Park. In the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century it was held by Henry Rowdell. On its west side was a separate enclosed portion between the stream and the edge of the road, called Catton Slade or Catton Gate. The vicar's glebe lands of the Hernes lay across the road to the west.

The stream through Northolt village and the ditches which fed into it required frequent maintenance. Some of the ponds which later characterised the village certainly existed in this period. They served as fishponds and were probably also connected to the manor house moat system. Many ditches were needed to drain the surface of the local clay soil. They appear to have bordered most of the roads and fields and required regular maintenance. They probably all discharged into the streams. The manor court often ordered the cleaning out of specific lengths of ditch, and exacted fines from those who failed to comply.

As no manorial accounts have survived to provide the evidence, there are only a few indications of which crops were grown in the parish in the late medieval period, both on the demesne lands and the holdings of the tenants. Westminster Abbey as lord of the manor required the harrowing of arable land; harvesting the corn in August; weeding, hoeing and threshing; and mowing, carrying, lifting and turning the hay in the meadows.

The rents for the lease of the Northolt manor lands in the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries included ten quarters of oats to be delivered to Westminster Abbey each Christmas. In practice the farmer often kept the oats and paid their price to the Abbey.

The corn grown in the open fields had to be ground into flour, and therefore there was a need for a mill. However, no mill is mentioned in the *Domesday Book* survey for Northolt. The name of Mill Post Field suggests that there was a post windmill. Windmills were introduced into England in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century. It is thought that before this date a water mill driven by a stream may have been in the area, most probably near the north end of Northolt village green, in the Mandeville Green area.

The site of the moated manor house of Northolt was deserted at this period, and was replaced in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by a brick-built manor house which lay on the north side of the moat, later called Northolt Court.

## The Sixteenth Century

In 1518 an agreement reached, between the Bishop of London and the Vicar of Northolt, confirmed the Vicar's right to great and small tithes in consideration of £4 paid annually to the Bishop. In 1535 the living was worth £15 and twelve years later it was worth £26. The vicar held 31 acres in the common fields.

The Abbey continued in possession until in 1540 when, because the Church of Rome would not play ball with Henry VIII, he confiscated it. Therefore from 1540 until 1541, Henry VIII was officially 'Lord of the Manor of Northolt'! Can you just imagine Henry marching, knee deep in mud, through the Village followed by his entourage! I do not think so some how! Then in 1541 when trying to appease the Church, Henry gave Northolt to Thomas Thirlby, Bishop of Westminster. This was a short-lived bishopric for in 1550 came the dissolution of the monasteries, after which Northolt passed through a series of landowner families until the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Most of these manorial lords did not live in the village, but leased the manorial assets to tenants.

The early modern village of Northolt continued to be grouped around the green on the site of its late medieval predecessor. Some cottages were built on the former green by encroachment under licence from the lords of the manor from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The rood loft and belfry of Northolt parish church were built in about 1521. A brick-built chancel was added about 1540, off-centre to the main axis of the nave. Both nave and chancel were re-roofed in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century. The vicars were often absentees and neglected their parish. The churchyard was surrounded by a rather inadequate fence, maintained at the expense of the householders of the parish, and by large elm trees. A poor-house was built on its western side, close to where that memorial Hall now stands.

As I have already said, the roads of the parish were notoriously bad, and almost impassable in winter. Their maintenance on the clay soil always presented difficulties. Despite repeated expenditure by the parish on improving them with gravel, their poor condition kept Northolt isolated from the surrounding countryside and the growing influence of London. The Northolt manorial tenants owed work service for the repair of roads. In 1564 George Vincent was fined for failing to bring his carts for four days to carry gravel for the repair of the parish highways. In 1597 John Vyncent bought two acres of land in Greenford as a gravel pit for the use of Northolt parish for the repair of its roads.

The medieval pattern of arable farming probably continued with little change. There were manorial regulations at Northolt about the pasturing of cattle, geese and sheep on the common fields, and the ringing of pigs. In 1540 the vicar kept pigs on his demesne lands at the Herne. The farmer's accounts of 1544-6 suggest that there was a shortage of tenants.

At Smith's Farm there was formerly a timber-framed brick barn of four bays, built in 1595. The date is carved on the south side of its entrance bay, along with the initials "RG". In 1987 it was removed from the site and re-erected at Chiltern Open Air Museum. It was probably fairly typical of the agricultural buildings in the area in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## **The Seventeenth Century**

By the 1670s the brick mansion of Northolt Court was no longer lived in. The parish church was again falling into disrepair, and pigs were rooting about in the unfenced churchyard. By 1610 the vicarage existed on the site of Rectory Gardens, when it had a detached kitchen, two barns, a stable, outbuildings, a garden and an orchard. The chancel of the church was rebuilt in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and a gallery installed. The wooden west end of the church, incorporating a belfry, was probably also built in this century.

George Palmer (Vicar 1638-43) was sequestered in 1643 on the grounds that he spoke against Parliament, enjoyed incestuous relations with his sister-in-law, and had deserted his cure to join the Royalist Army. Palmer seems to have enjoyed considerable popularity among the parishioners, who described his successor, Robert Malthus (Vicar 1643-61), as 'a factious preacher'. Although they petitioned Cromwell for his removal, alleging that he was an unsatisfactory speaker, preached against the army in Scotland, and failed to observe national thanksgiving, Malthus retained the living until the Restoration.

The next Vicar, William Bradbourne (1661-84) was frequently absent from the Parish, during his absence the cure was served by a curate. By 1664 the parts of the church were falling into disrepair. There was no chalice, and the plate consisted of a silver cup and a pewter plate. The churchyard was unfenced, so that pigs entered. Little was done to remedy these defects until 1685, when it was ordered that adequate plate be provided and the churchyard fenced.

There were 90 adult male inhabitants of Northolt parish in 1642, and in 1664 there were 54 occupied houses, not including the poor house.

The poor state of the roads continued to isolate the village, and in 1676 the stream in Catton Slade needed cleaning out again and was flooding across the road into Northolt village. Nothing changes!

The medieval systems of common fields remained in use, and the boundaries of the pastures were unchanged. Some details about the fields in Northolt are known from the late 17<sup>th</sup>-century survey by Matthew Hart. Great Field contained almost half the common arable land, divided into 30 shots with 280 strips, parcelled out among 25 different tenants. Strips in the Great, Tunlow and Millpost Fields included glebe land allocated to the vicar. Nearly all of the land in these fields was still worked as arable, by a sequence of crop rotation of wheat, followed by beans, followed by a fallow year. Some peas, barley, oats and tares were also grown. It appears that in 1612 Northolt manorial tenants were forbidden to graze their horses on the roadsides or the paths leading into the fields. Don't ask me why!

From 1661 to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Medlar Farm was run by the Greenhill family. In the late 17<sup>th</sup> century the Greenhills grew wheat and beans, and they also had pastures and orchards. These were a series of small fields called Greenhill's Closes enclosed from the Great Field, and lying near the farmhouse. Other lands belonging to the farm were strips in the common fields.

## The Eighteenth Century

The churchyard was open to incursions by pigs and sheep in 1715, although the church was in reasonable repair. Pews had been installed and a new gallery erected, for the use of singers and servants. Several 18<sup>th</sup> century Vicars were absentees and the cure was served by the Curate. Between 1755 and 1758, Goronwy Owen, the Welsh poet was Curate.

In 1757 Sir Francis Childs acquired the estate (he also owned Osterly Park), remaining in his family until its sale in 1827. The village of Northolt remained isolated from the rest of Middlesex, its coach-routes and its markets. It remained a poor agricultural community, where little changed. Yet again in the 1790s the roads were said to be very bad in winter, despite heavy expenditure on repairs. By 1746 two inns were established, and the White Hart existed at West End. Large brick buttresses were added to the west end of Northolt parish church in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century to prevent collapse, and a gallery was added at the west end for the use of singers and servants.

Ponds in Northolt village provided its water supply, as there was no spring water available. The first well in the village was sunk by the vicar in the courtyard of the Rectory in 1791. It was dug 164 feet deep and the water rose rapidly to within four feet of the surface; it therefore acted as an artesian well, drawing water from the chalk sub-stratum below the London Clay. The vicar allowed the villagers free access to the well.

Most of the fields around Northolt village remained meadowland. Three new consolidated farms were formed around the village during 1710-1715, based around new brick farmhouses at Pond Farm, Manor Farm and Court Farm, which replaced Northolt Court. Part of Dovehouse Close was taken to form the site of Court Farm, and was used as meadow land in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Dovehouse Close changed its name first to Northolt Court Meads, then to Court Farm Meadow, and then to Eight and Five Acres. It was divided into these two portions by a hedge running north-south, but this had been removed by 1827. Parts of these fields now form the east side of Belvue Park. Berry Close was also used as a meadow. The Vicar of Northolt changed the glebe land of the Herne from arable to grassland. His leases of the glebe lands to tenants in 1729 and 1733 included the obligation to maintain a bull and a boar for the service of the parishioners. **(Whatever turns you on!)** Talking of animals, in the 1790s there was the manor pound for holding stray animals, sited at the north end of the village green.

More of Northolt's open fields were lost when Pond Farm, Court Farm and Manor Farm were created, but common field agriculture persisted in the parish until the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The arable common fields were increasingly turned over to enclosed grass fields in the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, both for pasture and to grow hay for the London market. With careful manuring, two tons of hay could be produced per acre. It was cut by immigrant labourers in May, and the after-grass was leased out by the farmers for stock grazing, although the livestock was not bred locally. Wheat, oats, peas and beans were still being grown extensively at the end of the century on the better drained soils.

## The Nineteenth Century

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Northolt began to establish more connections with London and the rest of Middlesex, and to grow a little in size. In 1801 the Paddington branch of the Grand Union Canal was constructed from south-west to north-east, snaking along the 100 foot contour line through Mill Post Field, through the corners of Great Field and East Field, on through the pastures to the south of Northolt church, and across the parish boundary through Garroway Field and to the south of Greenford Green. Some of the owners and farmers of these fields were at first reluctant to see them cut in two. Bridges were built to take Ruislip Road, Ealing Road, and two footpaths between Northolt and Greenford across the canal. The canal tied the economy of the area closer to the metropolis. It provided a link with the London market first for the sale of hay, and later for the transport of locally-made bricks. It also opened the area to day-trippers, who travelled on excursion barges from Paddington to Greenford Green wharf to view the scenery of Harrow until about 1840. The Grand Junction Canal Company ran a passenger service of three boats all the way from Paddington to Uxbridge. Breakfast and other refreshments were provided. This service was withdrawn as unprofitable in 1812. The presence of the Canal accelerated the growth of the hay trade to London. Barges took the hay to wharves at Paddington and returned with loads of metropolitan manure to spread on the fields.

Local farming families prospered in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and were the leaders of local society, riding to hunt with the Greenford Drag Hounds. The Greenhill Family were at Medlar Farm (sometimes called Hunt's Farm or West End Farm), followed by the Atkins family from 1866.

In these farming changes some of the older small enclosed fields were amalgamated and their boundaries removed. The hedge between Berry Close and Eight and Five Acres had been removed by 1869, and the amalgamated area was called Church Field. It now forms most of Belvue Park. Catherine Meadow was allotted to the vicar as glebe land when the common fields were enclosed in 1835. Part of this field forms the south-west corner of Belvue Park.

During this period of change, there was a dispute between the Rector of Greenford Parish and the Vicar of Northolt over the latter's rights to certain tithe payments. These rights were taken by Greenford Parish but were redeemed by Northolt in 1842.

Sharvel Lane was no longer a continuous route by the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although some sections survived as field paths. The muddy state of the other roads retarded any further development. Northolt could still be described in 1876 as "a quiet little country village reached by very crooked lanes".

More cottages were built on parts of Northolt Green, giving the centre of the village approximately its current shape. A drum-shaped water pump was installed on the green by public subscription in 1873. Several of the older buildings, such as Manor Farm and Deynte's Cottage, were rebuilt in the course of the century by the Shadwell family, Sir Lancelot Shadwell having brought the estate in 1827. (Sir Lancelot's other claims to fame are; being the last Vice Chancellor of England, and owning land in East London, and naming it Shadwell) A school was established in the former poor-house and replaced in 1868 by the present War Memorial Hall building on an adjacent

site. This continued to operate as a school until 1906. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Northolt remained a lightly-populated agricultural community.

In 1869 Charles H Harcourt established undenominational missions in Ealing Road and in Oldfield Lane in Greenford, for the support of the poor of the area, served by the Baptists and Methodists of Ealing. The Northolt mission continued to meet in its mission hall until it burnt down in 1944.

The census returns of 1841-81 suggest that Northolt had a relatively static population. Agricultural labourers and farmers formed the largest occupational group in the parish in the census returns of 1851-81, although there was a slight decline in their numbers over this period. Hay binders and hay dealers appeared in the census returns of 1861, 1871 and 1881, but the censuses were not taken at the right time of the year to record the seasonal haymakers, who arrived in June at this period.

The remaining 600 acres of the open field land were eliminated in the enclosure award of 1816 and the entire parish was divided up into fields enclosed by hedges and averaging 7½ acres, mostly planted with grass. These were allotted to the landowners of the parish, according to the size of their holdings in the previous open field strips. The strip system was now thought to be out-moded, because it did not allow cross-ploughing, restricted the crops that could be grown, and wasted time in moving around and between the strips. The common grazing rights on the village green were ended, but the remainder of the open green was maintained by the Shadwells.

The local farmers concentrated increasingly on growing hay for the London fodder market, particularly during the high prices of the Napoleonic Wars. About a hundred seasonal labourers were brought in each year from Ireland, Wales, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and even Italy, to assist with hay-making, sleeping rough in the barns. Women and children were also employed. In 1807 the timing of the Greenford school-children's holiday was changed from the corn harvest to the hay harvest. The hay was all cut by hand. After the harvest, sheep were brought in from the Midlands and cattle from Wales to graze on the after-grass.

The only industry of any scale to be established in the area in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was brick-making. The brickearth deposits in the south part of Northolt parish in Tunlow Field were exploited from about 1825 onwards for the manufacture of bricks. These were made from the quarried brickearth on the spot in brickfields. The brickearth was dug in the autumn and spread out on the ground to make it workable in the following spring and summer. The bricks were then made by hand or by simple machines, laid out to dry and baked in temporary kilns called brick clamps. Most of the work was carried out in the open air or under small shelters; there were hardly any buildings in the brickfields. The bricks were transported to London by barge along the canal for construction work, especially for the new London sewers. The barges returned with loads of ashes, which were mixed with the clay to form the bricks and aid their firing, and were also used as fuel. The local manufacturers were William Filbey in 1825, Charles Brett in 1834, and John Winkworth in 1835.

Before 1865 the soil of East Field was also dug for brickearth, adjacent to Kensington Road and the canal, at the Bridge Farm, and there were kilns and an engine house there. After the field was worked out, it was called Fisher's Farm, and used for

breeding pigs and geese. The industry declined in the 1860s, as some of the brickearth deposits were exhausted. The New Patent Brick Company introduced mechanised methods of manufacture in 1896, and its works covered 33 acres, but in 1901 it went into liquidation. Other manufacturers took over, and brickmaking continued at the southern end of Northolt until 1939.

The brickfields all lay to the south. However, the industry made an impact on the occupation profile of the local area. About a hundred men worked in the brickfields in 1844, with another hundred coming during the summer months. Brickmakers and brickfield labourers figured in the census returns for Northolt in 1851 and 1861, and in smaller numbers in 1871 and 1881. The total population of Northolt was actually decreasing in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the brick industry declined. Many of the workers were only employed seasonally and therefore not resident in the winter months. Women and children also worked in the brickfields. Child labour was more strictly controlled after 1867, but children were still being kept out of school to make bricks in the 1890s.

After the brick pits were worked out, canal barges brought loads of general rubbish from London via the refuse wharves at Paddington to tip into the disused pits. The barges were operated by private contractors: William Mead and Company used a tip in Greenford, and Thomas Clayton Ltd of Paddington tipped in pits on the southern border of Northolt.

A guano works was built on one of the redundant brickfields. Guano means; fertilizer, made from the excrement of fish-eating sea birds, deposited in rocky coastal regions, containing urates, oxalates and phosphates of ammonium and calcium or any similar but artificially produced fertilizer.

### **The Twentieth Century**

The railways did not reach Northolt and Greenford until 1903, when the Great Western Railway built a line across Northolt parish to the north of the village, with a loop line running southwards through Greenford, on which two stations were built. A small station was built at Northolt in 1907, and rebuilt in 1948 when the Central Line was extended along the same route.

A new village school was built in 1907 on the east side of Church Road. The Western Avenue later ran to its north. It has since been demolished to make way for the Target Roundabout. In 1913 a sale catalogue for cottages described them as "situate in the Old World Village of Northolt". Some of the medieval windows in Northolt church were repaired under the direction of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in about 1920, and in 1922 there was still only one shop in the parish.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a change in local agriculture to dairy farming to supply milk to the growing suburbs of Ealing, Uxbridge and Harrow. However, hay was still harvested in the area until the Second World War. F W Crees moved from Ravenor Farm in Greenford to Court Farm in Northolt in 1901. He had several of the early 18<sup>th</sup>-century outbuildings replaced by the Shadwells as part of his conditions for taking the lease. He replaced the old-fashioned methods of hay-harvesting with machinery, and also founded a thriving dairy farm with more than a hundred cows. He

used treacle and apple pulp from local factories as cattle feed. Crees also grazed horses and sheep. He improved his fields by the use of “mack”, manure mixed with road sweepings, butchers’ and fishmongers’ offal, and other rubbish, which he imported from London by barge. (Mack; from old French, meaning of unknown origin). He rented Hearn Field from the Rector of Northolt, where there was still a row of chestnut trees along Church Road, later removed by the construction of the Target Roundabout. His workers lived in Willow Cottages on Northolt Green. One of them brought up six children there, although there were only two rooms in the cottage. Crees left the farm in 1919, losing heart after his son had died as a teenager.

The backfilling of the old brickworkings with rubbish, brought from London by barge continued. St Marylebone Council began tipping here in 1917, but had already filled its site by 1919. Mr Bodworth, the tenant of Smith’s Farm, then provided a twenty-acre field on the east side of the canal. The rubbish was brought along the canal in Council tugs. In the summer of 1921 the tip caught fire and burned for ten days. Part of the north side of the site was taken for the construction of Western Avenue in the early 1930s. In 1932 Ealing Borough Council acquired the site as an open space. As the area became more residential, the local householders complained of the smell, the flies and the rats which were inevitably present. Tipping was stopped in 1939 and the site became overgrown. It is now the Marnham Fields compartment of Countryside Park.

Some of the smaller brickfields at the south end of Northolt closed in 1921. The Southern Brick and Tile Works was in business here in 1934, and brickworks continued to operate until 1939. They were later occupied by the premises of Taylor Woodrow. The Greenford dye works became a munitions factory during the First World War from 1916 to 1918, as National Filling Factory no 28. It was revived after 1918 as a leather-dyeing factory.

The Northolt Sewage Works was established by 1935. This was at the junction of Rowdell Road and Kensington Road, on the site of Belvue School.

In 1919 Northolt was still owned by the Shadwell family, the Lord of the Manor was Dr. C. Shadwell, provost of Oriel Collage Oxford, but on the 13<sup>th</sup> February 1919 he died and the estate passed to his brother Lancelot, who died shortly after. The estate then passed to W.H.L. Shadwell, who had been Historian and Steward to the estate (apparently he was not as well liked, by his tenants, as the Dr. had been). W. Shadwell, for what ever reason put the estate up for sale by auction, in lots. The sale catalogue listed every House, Farm and Public House owned by the **last** Lord of the Manor of Northolt. **(I am told that the title still exists)** The whole estate covered 540 acres, the edges appear to have been sold off over the centuries, for in Tosig’s time the estate was much larger.

The auction took place on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1919, the Crown and its land sold for £2,050. The land was so large that St. Bernard’s R.C. Church is built on part of it and a large piece was sold to a developer in 1998. We will pass over that point quickly!

The Harvester, known in 1919 as the Load of Hay public house fetched £1,150 (built in 1806 as the Work House and rebuilt in 1928), Deyntes Cottage was bought for £750 by its tenant, Benjamin Martin, who was Church Organist and Headmaster at the

Church School (the cottage being named after a Henry Deynte who had lived in a cottage on the site in 1461). The list went on; Judge Cottages for £300, Ivy Cottage £400 (a lot smaller than it is today), The Bakery £250, Herbert's Cottage (or Beck's Cottage) £500, Fern Cottage £300, Smith's Farm £5,000, Iliot's Green Farm £1,145 (now Islip Manor Park, the farm house, which was some times used as the Manor House, was used after the sale as a Clinic but, thanks to the Council's policy of nil maintenance, it fell down a few years ago!), Moat or Pond Farm (now the Farmlands and the 'Clock Green'. The pond was some 2 acres and was filled in to form the 'Clock Green' and Mandeville Road), Manor Farm, 139 acres fetched £7,750, the Manor Farm House was built in 1850 for the Shadwells and is now the Community Centre. I would point out that the Council has, on several occasions had thoughts of demolishing the house and build houses on the site. Fortunately for the Village, the Council has seen sense each time!

The largest farm was in fact 'Lot No. 1', Court Farm, 169 acres, sold for £10,750 which included several cottages and the Blacksmith's (stood where 5/7 Court Farm Road stands today). The farm stretched Eastward from Ealing Road, past the Great Western Railway to the North, over the Grand Union Canal and up to Smith's Farm in the South. The Farmhouse stood at the top of Court Farm Lane (now Court Farm Road) and was, at the time of the sale, a dairy farm with cows, goats and pigs

Well Northolt was up for grabs and we entered the era of the developer, the bulk of the estate was purchased by 'Percy Bilton' who aquired Court Farm later from its new owner Mr. Richard Watson. During the 1930's, the face of Northolt was to change beyond recognition (Bilton had intended to develop the piece of land we now call Belvue Park but Ealing Council intervened and purchased it). Northolt, that sleepy village that time appeared to have overlook, was brutally brought into the 20<sup>th</sup>. Century with house upon house being planted where hay had grown, cows had grassed and pigs had wallowed.

There was not much left of the old village by 1924, but fortunately for us there were eight far sighted people who, in 1927, joined together to save the Village Greens by purchasing the School Hall and Greens from the Shadwell Estate for the sum of £250. In that same year those eight people entered into a Deed of Trust.

The Hall has been called many names over the years; Manor Hall, Parish Hall, School Hall, War Memorial Hall and Memorial Hall. The reason for War Memorial dates from the time of the trust when the Trustees stated that the property was purchased ***'for the purpose of a permanent memorial to the memory of the Men of Northolt in the County of Middlesex who fell in the Great War of 1914'***.

The names of those brave Northolt men can be found in St. Mary's Church, but sadly for those who wish to see the board you will have quite a search on your hands as it is tucked away in a corner!

In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the condition of the roads was still a frequent cause of complaint. In the 1920s and 1930s Northolt was rapidly opened up to road traffic by the construction of a series of wide roads. The old village centre was by-passed. Western Avenue was constructed east-west across the centre the parish as the Mandeville Road arterial road from London to Oxford, opening in 1934. Grass strips

ran along its centre, separating the carriageways. By 1935 a road was built to link Church Road to the lane to Wood End, across the infilled long pond at Pond Farm. It was originally called Ansgar Road but someone realised Ansgar, Lord of the Manor was on the losing side at the Battle of Hastings, so it was changed to the winning side, hence Mandeville Road. Church Road was widened by 1936. Rowdell Road was laid out to run parallel to the canal between 1935 and 1938, forming the southern boundary of Belvue Park. Industrial premises were first established in Rowdell Road and Belvue Road in 1937.

The improved communications finally lead to the rapid growth of Northolt, and the agricultural landscape disappeared.

The glebe land of the parish was also sold for building in the 1920s. Much of the land was bought by Richmond Watson of Manor Farm in Greenford, who then sold it on to Percy Biltons. The population of Northolt jumped from 904 in 1921 to more than 3,000 in 1931, and nearly 26,000 by 1961.

Besides Belvue Park, the Council also purchased parts of the former glebe land, including Cattons Mead.

Rectory Park, covering a large part of the former Great Field to the north of Ruislip Road, was developed by the Borough Council as a sports and recreation ground, and now forms the Rectory Fields compartment of Countryside Park. An area to the west of Ealing Road and south of Western Avenue was leased to Kensington Borough in 1938 as playing fields. This now forms part of the Northala Fields compartment of the Park.

In the 1930s the Seven Sisters Riding School was based at Medlar Farm. The 17<sup>th</sup>-century farmhouse was demolished around 1939. Council houses were built on part of the farm land in 1948, and other parts were taken into Rectory Park. More council flats were built in 1968, the trenches for their foundations revealing the Romano-British features mentioned earlier.

In 1931 the Aladdin Factory (now empty) was built on a site that was to be on the north side of Western Avenue, to make lamps and heaters. Its most notable feature is a tall Italianate tower, built to store water drawn from the artesian well beneath, which can be seen from many parts of the surrounding area. A branch line ran to the factory from the Great Western Railway line near Greenford Station. It was planned to build other factories along the Western Avenue corridor, but they never materialised.

As war loomed in 1938, land beside Long Drive in Greenford was taken over as a sub-depot of Woolwich Arsenal. The buildings of the Kelvin Construction Company Ltd here were requisitioned in April 1941 for use as workshops. Twenty more buildings were constructed, with railway platforms, a telephone exchange and a NAAFI canteen, and the site was made a Central Ordnance Depot for the storage and distribution of military equipment. Its fortunes can be traced from May 1941 to December 1945 in its war diaries at the Public Record Office. It lay between Long Drive and the canal, to the north of the Aladdin Factory and its sports ground.

In 1942 a camp for two thousand ATS women was built on the Kensington Playing Fields, so that the RAOC men could be released for active service. Labour from the Indian Pioneer Corps was out-housed in Northolt. Increased use was made of railway sidings, which passed through the marshalling yard at Greenford Station, and other facilities were also expanded. A training school was added in 1943. The Depot took over sites in Rowdell Road and Long Drive, and at the Northolt pony racing track for the storage of guns. The race track was later used as a camp for Italian prisoners of war. The canal began to be used to transport stores to Woolwich Arsenal by barge in this year. In 1944 the Depot was extremely busy during the preparations for D-Day. A new civilian canteen was commenced on the corner of Long Drive and Western Avenue, and completed in January 1945. Eight acres of land between Rowdell Road and Western Avenue were requisitioned in May 1945 as the Belvue Gun Park.

The Depot suffered bomb attacks and was always adding more air raid shelters and camouflage. The digging of slit trenches as shelters proved unsatisfactory because they filled with water. There was some superficial damage from a high explosive bomb in October 1943, and in March 1944 another fell immediately in front of the main gates, killing one man and wounding three. There were several flying bombs in July, and in August a V1 flying bomb landed between the Depot and the ATS camp, creating a crater fifteen feet in diameter and eight feet deep, and injuring 57 ATS personnel. In March 1945 a V2 rocket bomb made a direct hit on Building 413, destroying it completely and severely damaging the four adjacent buildings. There were 110 casualties, including fourteen dead.

It was this explosion that blew out St. Mary's stained glass window, the then incumbent made himself very unpopular by commenting that he was pleased that a bomb had blown out the horrible window, forgetting the dead and injured! He was made to apologise.

Staff morale was maintained throughout the war by a programme of dances, film shows, concerts and plays, and Christmas parties for the children of the civilian workers. There were also visits from the Queen and the Princess Royal. In September 1945 there were still 1,161 RAOC personnel and 943 ATS personnel at Greenford, but its status was changed to a Bulk Holding Depot in October. About 450 German prisoners of war were then housed at Northolt, some working in the Depot.

The flat land at the bottom of Belvue Park had pre-fabricated homes to house the homeless, due to the bombing and the land between Fort & Summit Roads & Rowdell Road was turned into allotments.

After the War Northolt tried to return to normality with the return of the factories to peace time manufacturing. In the early 60s Gallagher built a large Office and Warehouse complex on the allotment site to deal with the new craze of gift tokens in the cigarette packets and to store the FREE gifts. At this time the two gentlemen living in Fort Road formed a Residents Association. They obviously spent a long time working out a name for the association; it was called "Fort & Summit Road Residents Association. One was Harry J Hellier (my senior surveyor and mentor) and the other was Mr. George Tanner (my future father-in-Law!)

1966 was a memorable year for England and Northolt; for in July, England won the World Cup and in September I moved into Fort Road! In late October Northolt was informed, by the Ministry of Transport, that a new arterial route was to be built, linking the M4 to the M1 (the D Ring Road) and it would go through Northolt, either to the North West (around the back of Islip Manor houses), or South East through the Industrial Estate in Rowdell Road.

The plans were very sketchy, in fact the plans showed no fewer than 3 versions for the preferred route to the South East. One knocked my house down, along with the rest of Fort & Summit, one left the even numbers of Summit and 2 to 20 Fort Road looking onto the new road in a cutting. The third version left Fort & Summit, but all three demolished the newly built Gallaghers!

Just imaging, less than two months a Northoltonian and I was about to be compulsory purchased!

The newly formed Residents Association decided to enlarge themselves to take up the Fight. So in 1967 Harry Hellier formed the "Belvue Park & District Residents Association", and I was printer and dogs body. After a few years the name was changed to "The Northolt Village Residents Association".

One could say 'We won the battle but lost the war', for the D Ring Road was never built in its entirety as it was to be overtaken by the M25 but the section from Hayes to the White Hart was built, although we fought to have the Road bypass the White Hart altogether and finish on the A40 close to the old entrance to RAF Northolt. If only the M.O.T. had listened to the locals we would not have the traffic chaos we have today.

In the late 60s early 70s Ealing built the new School in Rowdell Road, but like the M.O.T. they took no notice of the locals who reminded them of the frequent flooding in that area. So after the first winter in which the Caretaker's House flooded they had to rebuild the house on stilts! In late 70s the Village was made a 'Conserved Area' and around the turn of the millennium Northolt & Greenford Countryside Park came into existence and the village was taken into the complex as the 'Heritage Centre'.

Next year, 2012, the Association celebrates it's 45<sup>th</sup> year.

That brings you up to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and I hope that one of the Association Members continues to keep this page up to date.