

BROOK GREEN



Brook Green lay adjacent to a main route into London. It was surrounded by market gardening land, as well as brick fields (where clay was extracted for making bricks) to the north and extensive bleach fields (part of a bleach works and drying ground for laundry) in the Blythe Road area. In 1839, Brook Green was described by the historian Thomas Faulkner as a pleasant and respectable village with several large houses and extensive views northwards of the surrounding country. However it also had its problems. A brook polluted with waste from the brick fields flowed through the common, and an annual May fair there had to be suppressed after 1823 because it appeared to attract a rowdy element. Slater's

Buildings, later the site of Cadby Hall in Hammersmith Road, was a notorious slum in the mid-nineteenth century.

The Roman Catholic tradition in this part of Hammersmith is strong, dating from the late seventeenth century. The influx of Irish immigrants to the area in the 1840s and 1850s encouraged the establishment of a number of Catholic institutions, including the parish church of Holy Trinity, built in 1853. Brook Green House nearby was originally a school for Catholic girls known as The Ark, and later a Catholic teacher training college until 1925.

The south side of the Green was the first to be built up when Dr Iles' almshouses were founded in 1629. Their site is now covered by part of St. Paul's Girls School, opened in 1904. Other houses included Eagle House, Bute House and The Grange (home of the actor Sir Henry Irving), none of which survive. By the end of the nineteenth century houses on a more modest scale had also been built along the north side of Brook Green.

The Green was acquired by the Metropolitan Board of Works in about 1880. Shortly afterwards they extended it by buying some land owned by the Bird family, well-known local building contractors. In the 1930s Hammersmith Borough Council seriously considered building a new Town Hall in the middle of Brook Green, but the proposal was strongly opposed by local residents.