

SHEPHERDS BUSH GREEN



For centuries Shepherd's Bush was a quiet backwater, rural in character and centred around the village green, formerly part of the manor waste ground. The green was situated on the road to Uxbridge, and was surrounded by farmland, market gardens and brick fields. Thomas Faulkner described Shepherd's Bush in 1839 as a "pleasant village", and noted that several large houses had been built in recent years which added to its respectability.

Shepherd's Bush had already begun to change when the Hammersmith and City Railway opened in 1864 and further encouraged the development of the area. New streets of houses were built on former agricultural land, as well as shops around

the green, which was tidied up as a public space. The arrival of the Central Railway (later renamed the Central Line) in 1900 accelerated the process.

In 1908 the Franco-British, the first exhibition staged at the White City, was opened and visitors poured in: eight million of them in six months. Shepherd's Bush Market was formally opened in 1914, although it had been in existence for some years before then. The early twentieth century also saw the building of various places of entertainment on the Green, including the Shepherd's Bush Empire which was opened in 1903. However the Green itself had a poor reputation and in 1910 up to 250 homeless people were sleeping rough there every night.

Since the Second World War there have been significant changes around Shepherd's Bush Green. On the south side, the old shops have been replaced by a shopping precinct, with tower blocks and a service station built alongside. On the eastern side of the Green the roundabout has been enlarged to incorporate the Thames Water Ring Main. The retail development on former railway land north of the Green should bring greater prosperity to an area which has tended to be relatively deprived compared with other parts of the borough.