

THE HERSCHEL PARK HISTORY TRAIL GUIDE

follow our history trail map overleaf and use our history trail guide to learn more about the history of Herschel Park and its surrounding area

1 Upton Court, Datchet Road

Upton Court stands next to the ancient parish church of St Laurence and was the manor house for the parish of Upton. In 1156, the manor was given to Merton Priory, together with the adjoining manors of Wexham, Burnham and Taplow. Merton Priory owned these manors for almost 400 years.

Around 1330, a new manor house was built by the Prior of Merton Abbey. The manor house was later known as Upton Court. The manor was owned by Merton Priory until the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1537, when all religious houses were confiscated by Henry VIII.

Tenants and owners of Upton Court have included Robert Barker, King's Printer to James I, who published the first edition of the Authorised Bible of 1611 and Sir Marmaduke Darrell, Cofferer and Controller of the Royal Household to King James and Charles I. More recently, in the 20th century, the Earl of Harewood owned Upton Court. The house remained in private ownership until 1986, when it was purchased and restored by the owners of the 'Slough Observer'.



2 Church of St Laurence, Upton-cum-Chalvey

The Church of St. Laurence is the oldest building in Slough and dates to the 12th century. The church was restored in 1850, at which time medieval wall paintings, dating to the 13th century, were uncovered. The church also has brasses dating from the early 16th century.

Under the tower is the grave of Sir William Herschel, Astronomer to King George III and discoverer of the planet Uranus. Herschel lived in Observatory House on the Windsor Road. In 2001, a new stained-glass window was added to the church to commemorate Sir William Herschel and the planets.

James Thomas Bedborough, creator of the Upton Park Estate, and Matthew and Henrietta Ward, Court Painters to Queen Victoria, are buried in the churchyard.

To access the church please refer to their website www.saint-laurence.com



Church of St Laurence, Upton-cum-Chalvey c.1920

3 Eton Union Workhouse (Upton Hospital)

Upton Hospital was originally the Eton Union Workhouse, built in 1836 replacing an earlier parish workhouse. It was one of the first workhouses to be opened under the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act and could accommodate some 440 people. A chapel was added in 1837 and an infirmary, which could take 80 patients, was added in 1906.

The Eton Union Workhouse was known popularly as Albert House. In the 1930s, it was known as the Slough Public Assistance Institution and was run by Buckinghamshire County Council. In July 1948, it ceased to be a workhouse and was named Upton Hospital.



Eton Union Workhouse (now Upton Hospital) c.1880

4 St Mary's Church

By the 1830s the old parish church of St Laurence was in a state of disrepair and it was felt that there was a need to build a new church. This church was built on land adjacent to the workhouse and was completed by 1837. The new church like the parish church was also dedicated to St Laurence. In 1876 the church was enlarged in the Neo-Gothic style from designs by John Oldrid Scott, the son of Sir Gilbert Scott. A public subscription was set up to fund the construction of the church and Queen Victoria even made a contribution to the building fund.

Since the ancient church of Laurence was later fully restored, and to avoid confusion, the newer church was renamed St Mary's. By April 1913, the tower and spire had been completed, having been paid for in their entirety by Mr Elliman, a local philanthropist and businessman. The spire today is a very prominent Slough landmark.



5 Diana Lodge

Diana Lodge is the only surviving entrance lodge into the Upton Park Estate. Originally there were two others, one at the Arbor Hill entrance and the other at the junction with Vale Grove and Windsor Road.

Diana Lodge is named after the Goddess of Hunting and she is depicted in a frieze located in the gable end of the lodge. Up until the 1930s, each lodge was controlled by a top-hatted beadle in green livery with

gold braid. From the 1870s, until c.1930, the lodge also housed the Upton Park Billiard Club and Reading Room. The Lodge is now divided in two.



Frieze depicting the Goddess Diana on Diana Lodge

6 West Villas

West Villas was part of the original layout of the Upton Park Estate. This included a carriage drive between the villas and the park, which was common practice in mid-Victorian parks. The villas towards the end of the drive are part of the original architectural scheme, while the more central villas were rebuilt in the 1990s. As you walk down West Villas, look out for the rather beautiful Arts and Crafts terracotta plaque dated 1885.



West Villas c.1912

7 Victoria Terrace

Victoria Terrace was one of the main architectural elements within the Upton Park Estate. It originally consisted of three blocks of houses. Only two blocks exist today the most westerly one was destroyed by fire.

The Victoria Terrace blocks consisted of a number of 16-bedroomed houses, with drawing rooms, a kitchen and servant's quarters. These houses were occupied by the local and London gentry. Queen Victoria's Court Painters, Matthew and Henrietta Ward, lived in one of these houses.

During the 1990s, the houses were divided into a number of flats and a new row of houses and flats, fronting onto the park, was built and became known as Bulstrode Place.



Engraving of Victoria Terrace c. 1843

8 East Villas

East Villas made up the third architectural element of the Upton Park Estate. Only two of the original 1840s buildings stand today. The rest have been replaced by modern 20th century buildings. One of these villas was occupied by George Bentley, the son of Charles Dickens' publisher Richard. George Bentley lived there until his new house, known as 'the Mere', was built. George Murray Smith, the founder and first editor of the Dictionary of National Biography, also lived at East Villas.



Interior of the Parlour of 2 East Villas, Upton Park c.,1875

9 'The Mere'

'The Mere' is a black and white 'neo-Tudor' timber-framed house built for George and Richard Bentley in 1887. Richard Bentley Senior ran a successful publishing company and was responsible for employing the young Charles Dickens and publishing 'Oliver Twist' in 1838. After the death of George Bentley in 1895, the house and publishing firm were taken over by his son, Richard Bentley Junior. In his later years, Richard Bentley Jnr pursued a whole range of interests ranging from local history to meteorology.

Richard Bentley Jnr died in 1936, aged 92, and was buried in the Church of St Laurence. The house was run by his wife Lucy until 1960. It was then purchased by the National Foundation for Educational Research, who have occupied the site since 1964.

The Bentley Education Centre is housed in 'The Mere's' motor-carriage house. This is now believed to be the third oldest motor-carriage house in the country.



Architects Drawing of 'The Mere' c.1886

Further information on Herschel Park's history can be found in the education centre.

Want to know more about Herschel Park?

Learn more about the park and events at the Friends of Herschel Park website.

www.friendsofherschelpark.org

You can also visit the Slough Museum website for educational learning resources and further information.

www.sloughmuseum.org/play-learn/herschel-park/

