



House Names in the Mill Hill Park Conservation Area

Do you know the original name of your house? Would you like to find out? Read on...

In 2006 - 2007, my husband, local resident and archivist, Jerome Farrell did some original research into house names in Acton, including those in the Mill Hill Park Conservation Area. This resulted in a presentation on exactly that at the MHPRA AGM in June 2006; and another, "Chlorine Cottage and other Acton house names", looking at Acton more widely, to Acton History Group: on 14th March 2007. This was subsequently published by them.

We have now taken that material and used it as the basis for the introduction (see p. 2) by Jerome and for the five "house name catalogues" – one for each of our streets – posted here on the MHPRA website.

Each catalogue has an entry for every address in the Mill Hill Park Conservation Area – including yours!

Sometimes these are individual houses, sometime pairs of semi-detached houses or related groups or terraces. Each entry includes a photograph taken in 2018 or 2019 and in a few cases, details or other related imagery. To prevent confusion, full, modern addresses with a house number and postcode are included alongside their corresponding historical house names, with derivations, where these are known.

This undertaking took several months – with breaks! – and was finally completed with help from local resident, Marcia Hurst in January 2019.

So, why not look up your house now?

This is still "work in progress"! There will be errors. If you can correct any of them, or maybe you have your house's deeds and can supply a missing name, please let us know.

We hope you will enjoy finding out a little more about your house and its history.

Ray Batchelor
January 2019

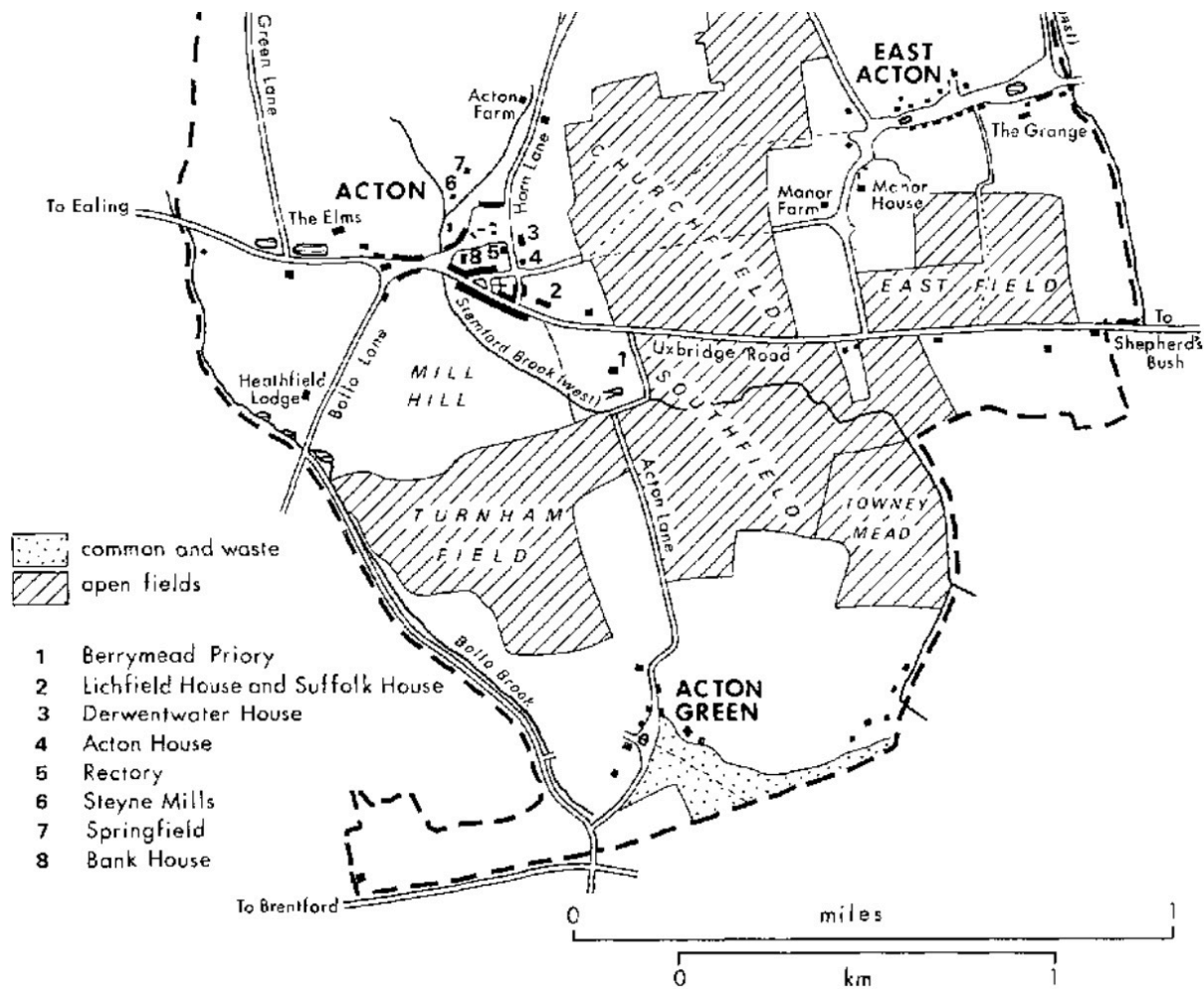


Fig 1: Detail of Acton c1805 taken from map originally published in the Victoria County History: Middlesex, 1982
<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/middx/vol7/pp2-7>

Jerome Farrell writes:

First a bit of background.

It is hard to imagine today, but until 1809 our neighbourhood was simply open fields, mostly pasture for grazing sheep or cattle. One of the large fields was called Windmill Field, or sometimes Mill Hill Field. Presumably a windmill once stood at, or close to, the top of the hill here. In May 1809 an auction took place. Hundreds of acres of agricultural land in and near Acton was sold off in 22 lots by the owner, Sir Henry Featherstonehaugh, who lived in Sussex. Four of these lots – about 53 acres divided into seven large fields – were bought by Richard White, for £8,400. White was a successful lawyer, and one of the founders, later on, of the Law Society. The purchase of these 53 acres in 1809 was effectively the birth of the Mill Hill estate. White's estate was a bit larger than the current Mill Hill Park Residents' Association area.



Fig 2: 1859 (?) "Plan of the Acton Hill House Estate, Acton, Middlesex, for sale by Daniel Smith Son & Oakley"

It also included our side of Gunnersbury Lane, from roughly opposite the former Cottage Hospital, (now a care home, the Acton Care Centre), down to the corner with Bollo Lane, and also a section around the eastern part of Avenue Road of what in 2007 was still the South Acton estate, now transforming into Acton Gardens.

Richard White bought this farmland intending to make it his home. He built a big house, and laid out a tree-lined road or drive to go right across his estate from east to west, with a lodge at each end called East Lodge and West Lodge (sometimes West End Lodge). About half of White's big house survives, though much altered, as number 11 Avenue Crescent.



Fig 3: 11 Avenue Crescent

The tree-lined roadway is now Avenue Road. East Lodge stood where 41 Avenue Road is, near the junction with Berrymead Gardens. It seems to have been completely rebuilt around 100 years ago.



Fig 4: 41 Avenue Gardens

West or West End Lodge is now 208 Avenue Road, at the corner with Gunnersbury Lane; it would be interesting to know more about this house, which has clearly been altered but which may contain some or all of the original lodge.



Fig 5: 208 Avenue Road

We now jump forward 50 years, to 1859. White has died some years ago and his widow, now living in Clifton near Bristol, decides to sell the Mill Hill estate. The London suburbs are

This is a detailed plat map of a residential subdivision. The map shows 31 lots, numbered 24 through 51. The lots are arranged in a grid-like pattern, with some lots having irregular shapes. The map includes street names: "MILL" at the top, "Avenue" on the left, and "Union" at the bottom. The lots are shaded in light green. Dimensions are given for the boundaries of each lot. Some lots have handwritten notes or marks, such as "X" or "50".

Lot Number	Dimensions (approximate)	Notes
LOT 24	40' 0" x 40' 0"	X
LOT 25	40' 0" x 40' 0"	X
LOT 26	40' 0" x 40' 0"	50'
LOT 27	40' 0" x 40' 0"	50'
LOT 28	40' 0" x 40' 0"	50'
LOT 29	40' 0" x 40' 0"	X
LOT 30	40' 0" x 40' 0"	X
LOT 31	40' 0" x 40' 0"	X
LOT 32	40' 0" x 40' 0"	50'
LOT 33	40' 0" x 40' 0"	X
LOT 34	40' 0" x 40' 0"	X
LOT 35	40' 0" x 40' 0"	X
LOT 36	40' 0" x 40' 0"	50'
LOT 37	40' 0" x 40' 0"	50'
LOT 38	40' 0" x 40' 0"	50'
LOT 39	40' 0" x 40' 0"	50'
LOT 40	40' 0" x 40' 0"	50'
LOT 41	40' 0" x 40' 0"	50'
LOT 42	40' 0" x 40' 0"	50'
LOT 43	40' 0" x 40' 0"	50'
LOT 44	40' 0" x 40' 0"	50'
LOT 45	40' 0" x 40' 0"	X
LOT 46	40' 0" x 40' 0"	50'
LOT 47	40' 0" x 40' 0"	X
LOT 48	40' 0" x 40' 0"	50'
LOT 49	40' 0" x 40' 0"	X
LOT 50	40' 0" x 40' 0"	50'
LOT 51	40' 0" x 40' 0"	50'

There was an immediate spate of house building. In fact, 60 of the houses in our area date from 1860-65.



Fig 7: 1865 Map

After the initial burst of house building, most of the gaps were filled in by houses built later on, but at a slower pace. The three roads of the estate south of Avenue Road (i.e. Avenue Crescent, Avenue Gardens and Heathfield Road) had a different history. They began to be developed later, from the late 1870s onwards, thanks to the well-known William Willett. Again, there was an initial flurry of building, with piecemeal development in later years until these roads were more or less all built up by the 1930s.

Like many other roads at the time, Mill Hill Road and Avenue Road had no house numbers until the mid 1880s. Up until then, all houses had names. Some were individual names, but terraces generally had one name, and pairs of semidetached houses (often called "Villas") usually shared a name between them, though there were exceptions to this. Numbers operated within each pair of villas (usually just number 1 and number 2), and in terraces, but there was no consistency about which end the numbers started from. Trying to find a house in a street you didn't know must have been frustrating. With the growth of the "penny post", no wonder a more logical system had to be introduced in the 1880s.

After the introduction of proper street numbering, house names lost their practical importance. New houses still sometimes had house names given to them, but their purpose was different - now they were ornamental names, for one house only, and with no official recognition. Today some people still use house names but, of course, it is the postcode which, together with the house number, form the critical means of identifying a particular address.

House and terrace names had this same sort of crucial importance prior to 1885. In a few cases these original Victorian names can still be seen, on a nameplate high on the wall, on the capstone of a pillar by the gate or in the glass fanlight above the front door. But most of these signs have disappeared and many people today don't realise that their house once had a name.

How can you find out the name of your house?

If you are lucky enough to own your house and to have the old deeds, these may give the original house name and also those of its neighbours. Sadly, however, many old deeds have been thrown away, as there is no obligation on owners or solicitors to keep them once a property has been registered at the Land Registry. In other parts of London correlating house names with numbers can be fairly easy, using annual rate books in the local archives or library. Unfortunately, however, most of the Victorian rate books for Acton have been destroyed. Reconstructing the house names in our area is therefore quite tricky and made worse in Avenue Road's case by the numbering system being changed again in 1906.

The main sources I have used are the Victorian census returns, and printed local directories held at Ealing Local Studies Library and on microfilm at the Guildhall Library in the City. I must stress that what follows is not complete. More work might be done. Some names are proving elusive. Things are complicated by house name changes, and I've also found references to house names without being able to work out which house they belong to. So if any of you can help identify more names, or correct any errors - particularly if you have old deeds at home - please let me know.¹ I've concentrated on the names and reasons behind them, but have mentioned a few of the people who lived locally in the Victorian period.

Most of the house names in our area - and this is probably true of other areas too - fell into several categories:

- Those suggesting prestige, or with aristocratic or royal associations (Sandringham, Blenheim and many more);
- Those referring to romantic or scenic places, often in Scotland, the Lake District or the West Country (the sort of places which well-off Victorians and Edwardians might have visited by rail) - Grasmere, Coniston, Glen-Etive and the like;
- Those evoking general peaceful and rural images - Rose Cottage, Ingleside, Fern Villa, Woodbine Villa, and so on;
- Those with some personal meaning for the builder or occupier (Crosby House, Melville Villas, and very probably Arthur, Bertha, Marion, Florence, Louise and Clare Villas, etcetera).

If you can help complete our records by supplying some of the missing names and making "Unknowns", known, that would be great. Knowing the original name of your house can add to your understanding of its past - and help you if you want to find out who has lived there before you, for example through old census returns.

The following house name catalogues are set out as if you were taking a walk, up one side of a road and down the other. I have only included the roads in the MHPRA Conservation Area, although White's Mill Hill Park estate was considerably larger (Fig. 7 gives some idea, even though the map was made after much of the estate had been sold off).

If you like the name, you might consider re-instating it in addition to your number - thus, perhaps, restoring not only a bit of the character and history of the original house but also of the Mill Hill Park area.

Jerome Farrell
June 2018

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