

Lavender Hill: Introduction

In the summer of 1774 a Mr Porter put up a reward for the return of his pony, strayed or stolen from 'a Field on Lavender-Hill'.¹ This is the earliest mention to have come to light of a name which, by implication, was already in common use. It referred to the north-facing slopes on either side of the Wandsworth road between the Battersea–Clapham boundary and the crossroads by the Falcon inn, at what is now Clapham Junction: a distance of about three-quarters of a mile. The roadway itself, which runs lengthways just below the crest of the hill, was not generally called Lavender Hill until well into the second half of the nineteenth century. No doubt it was the commercial growing of lavender that helped distinguish this area from the wider district of Battersea Rise, but firm evidence for lavender's cultivation here is lacking. The physician and actor John Hill may have been referring to Lavender Hill when he wrote of staying in 1754 in a house at Windsor Hill (probably an error for Wandsor, i.e. Wandsworth, Hill) 'on the edge of the Battersea Fields, where they cultivate the common lavender for the markets'. His host was a beekeeper, and the honey produced there was strongly scented by the flower.² Lavender aside, the chief distinction of the locale was its elevated position, giving not only good air and well-drained ground (with some natural springs), but views over Battersea Fields and the Thames to London and beyond. The name may have been applied originally to a single property, for a field on the north side of the road was once called Sun Hill and a field or fields on the south side Rush Hill. The first house here to have the name 'Lavender' was Lavender Hall on the south side in 1790, later called Lavender Lodge and finally Linden Lodge.

Like Clapham Common to its south, Lavender Hill attracted a small population of affluent residents from the late eighteenth century, owner-

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occupiers and tenants, some probably seeking weekend or summer retreats, others retirement homes, with grounds of an acre or two. The influx followed the sale in 1765 by Lord Spencer of most of the ground alongside the highway here to Thomas Barry, a merchant, who built a house (the White House) on its north side and probably a pair of houses on the south. By the time of Corris's map (1787) there were still only a few houses; fifty years later, the tithe map shows the spread of these villas at its fullest extent (Ill. 10.1). Barry's estate having been soon dispersed after his death, there was no overall plan and houses grew up piecemeal. Some detached, others in pairs or short rows, they were thickest north of the road, towards the west, in deep plots dropping down to the Heathwall sewer. East of these, on the level ground north of the sewer, was Samuel Poupart's working farmhouse of c.1834; in-between, back on Lavender Hill, Glycena House of about 1826 was also built in conjunction with a business, William Pamplin's plant and tree nursery. East of Pamplin's ground, Lavender Hill remained undeveloped until the 1860s, apart from the Beaufoy family's acetic acid works and a few cottages at Lavender Place, across the parish boundary in Clapham. The clean air and plentiful fresh water made Lavender Place ideal for laundresses, a number of whom lived there in the early-to-mid nineteenth century, bleaching and drying linen on the grassland behind the houses.³ On the south side of the road, which was mostly taken up by the grounds of the houses fronting Clapham Common, were four patches of development: Lavender Sweep at the west end, begun c.1786 (see Chapter 14); a cluster of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century villas eventually called Ashley, Linden and Combe Lodges; the larger Rush Hill House, also eighteenth-century; and at the east end a row of four smaller 1820s houses making up Lavender Terrace.

Almost all the houses were set quite close to the road (a necessity on the north side because of the steeply sloping site), allowing just enough space for a carriage sweep, screened by trees or shrubs and often a brick wall. Behind were pleasure gardens with lawns and walks bordered by more trees

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and shrubs, occasionally a more formal plantation, sometimes a fish-pond. As these gardens matured, some houses acquired conventional sylvan names, first recorded in the 1850s and 60s. Many properties would have been at their best even as the pressure of redevelopment was building up against them. Good kitchen gardens were usual, and self-sufficiency was usually further reinforced by such adjuncts as a cow-house, piggery, poultry yard and greenhouse, as well as stabling and coach-houses. Meadows or paddocks beyond the gardens completed the ensemble. A few residents leaned towards actual agriculture, including the bookseller John Sewell, who experimented on his estate in the late eighteenth century with fertilizer made from turf, chalk and loam drenched in linseed oil.⁴

Notwithstanding occasional depredations of highwaymen, armed burglars and ruffianly beggars, Lavender Hill was a safe as well as healthy and picturesque place to play at being a country gentleman. None of the villas was on a grand scale. The early householders were typically merchants, bankers, manufacturers, shopkeepers or other London tradesmen. This pattern held through the century or so of Lavender Hill's semi-rural suburban identity, but with a growing admixture of lawyers and other professionals, rentiers, widows on annuities, and a few theatricals.

In 1842 Lavender Hill was hailed as 'a most respectable and social neighbourhood'.⁵ No doubt for snobbish reasons residents usually gave their addresses as being in Clapham, Clapham Common or Wandsworth, but Battersea very seldom, unless Battersea Rise, a name with cachet. In the late nineteenth century Lavender Hill's western portion was part of the area sometimes designated New Wandsworth. This name did not take, and thereafter this end of the road was often thought of as belonging to the distinctly urban district of Clapham Junction.

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Lavender Hill's bourgeois character earned it a brief appearance in Robert Plumer Ward's 1839 three-decker *Pictures of the World at Home and Abroad*, as the summer home of Sir Robert Sterling, a City merchant. The scene is set towards the end of the eighteenth century, and recounts the social difficulties at Oxford of Sterling's 'upstart' son, Robert, hero of the first volume. Staying at an aristocratic friend's family castle, he is asked if his father has not a country house:

Alas! the citizen box he had on Lavender Hill, where the stage-coach took him up and set him down all the summer through, only shrank into a small nutshell, from looking round the castle. Lavender Hill, too, the *pen* of little merchants, small lawyers, brokers, and clerks in office! The very thought confounded him, and he answered ... "Yes! his father had a country-house in Surrey."⁶

But when the arrival of his Oxford *bête noire*, the Hon. Mr Tylney, drives Robert from the castle, it is to Lavender Hill that he flees, to 'what his father called his hermitage (Mr. Tylney had called it his *cockney* hermitage)'. There, in the pleasant acre-and-a-half of garden and orchard, he gradually recovers his spirits.

There was at least no citizen intruder, though a good deal of the city air, which seemed to extend all over Clapham, and all the adjoining commons. As the inhabitants however all kept within their own precincts, and there were many families among them who might really be tolerated in Robert's favourite classes of society, he tried to forget that he was at Lavender Hill.⁷

Though the pettiness of the inhabitants evoked by Ward was exaggerated, Lavender Hill was never exclusively wealthy. In the 1860s, when a typical villa might let for £100–200, the Senior family managed to afford their residence at Elm House by means of Jeanie Senior's own £400 a year, her husband Nassau's salary from his partnership in his brother's wine business,

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a £300 allowance from Nassau's father, and £300 contributed by her mother, who lived with them and their son. This allowed a staff of up to six servants, though no carriage. But theirs was an unusual household, its financial stability shaken by the failures of a spineless husband and the commitments of an energetically philanthropic wife.⁸ Their near-neighbour Henry Whiting, in what was originally an identical villa, also practised philanthropy but had no money worries. He left a personal estate of £143,000 in 1894, including £2,000 a year for his widow to continue at the house.

By then the old-style Lavender Hill villa was an anachronism. As early as the 1840s the area was losing its Arcadian charm to the smoke and noise of the railways crossing Battersea Fields, and the proximity of noxious industrial processes. Beaufoy's acetic acid works had been established near the eastern end of Lavender Hill around 1830, while by 1859 at Pig Hill (now Latchmere Road), close to some of the most select villas, rose the stench of offal and boiling hides and hooves from a size works there. In 1866 the area was still sufficiently out of town for a 'sadly ill and tired' Octavia Hill to stay at Elm House for 'some fresh air and quiet'.⁹ Soon thereafter almost the whole of the undeveloped ground on the north side of the road began to fill up with houses and shops along Lavender Hill and new side streets, pitched mainly at the better-off working and lower-middle classes: mostly in terraces, but with a few closely packed semi-detacheds. As redevelopment swept further west in the 1880s, Lavender Hill was transformed into an important shopping and business street, though retaining a large residential element. Just a few potential building sites remained when in 1886 the names of individual terraces were abolished and rational street numbering was imposed.

Of the old houses themselves there is scarcely any visual record. Most seem to have been plain brick buildings of two storeys only, often with large bow windows appropriate to the views. Only in the case of Woodham Lodge, built early in the nineteenth century by the banker John Alden Clarke, is there

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any suggestion of external flamboyance (see Ill. 10.6). Lavender Hill has associations with a few well-known architectural names. George Ledwell Taylor's childhood home was Normanby House, and George Devey spent the last years of his life at Ashley Lodge. Edward I'Anson took a lease of The Firs just as he was planning the development of new streets near by. But the designers of the villas are almost entirely unknown. An exception is the small house of 1812 later known as The Chestnuts, designed by David Laing. Against the odds, this has survived as a concretion amidst the late-Victorian terraced houses of Mossbury Road.

The following sections describe the development and occupation of the first generation of houses along Lavender Hill. All are now demolished, with the exception of The Chestnuts and possibly some fragmentary remains at the former Lavender Place west of Queenstown Road.

South side

Lavender Terrace

The four houses comprising Lavender Terrace were built around 1826 on a plot acquired by Robert Winter from Abraham Gardiner in 1823. The first residents included a Miss Poole, who briefly ran a 'seminary for young ladies' there.¹⁰ An advertisement of 1850 places the houses 'in the first-class of suburban dwellings', given the size and number of the reception rooms and the 'unusual completeness' of the domestic arrangements. They remained with the Winter family until 1863, when they were bought by John Goss Fleay, a former linen draper (father of the Shakespearean scholar Frederick Gard Fleay). The property had been augmented three years earlier by a

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paddock at the rear. Visual evidence of Lavender Terrace's allegedly 'distinguished appearance' is lacking. Maps suggest that the houses, which were built on a raised terrace, were actually designed as two pairs, linked by outbuildings.¹¹

For most of its existence, the occupants of Lavender Terrace were typically merchants, civil servants or clergymen, often with several servants. Stephen Cattley, for instance, a Norfolk rector and chaplain to the Female Orphan Asylum in Lambeth, was living at 2 Lavender Terrace in 1851, with his wife, several children and six servants. In the mid 1870s, No. 4 was occupied by William Swindlehurst, the corrupt secretary of the Artizans', Labourers', & General Dwellings Company, which bought Lavender Terrace in 1872. The estate was redeveloped in the 1880s, some windows and perhaps other salvage being reused in the new houses of Garfield Road and Lavender Hill (pages #-#).

Rush Hill House

Often referred to simply as Rush Hill, this was one of the earliest, perhaps the first, of the villas along Lavender Hill. Its origins are obscure. In his will of 1770, the hop factor Thomas Barry mentions 'my two messuages' in the occupation of Edmund Rush on the south side of the road. These may have been a semi-detached pair later made into one. There were eight bedrooms, and the principal room was a drawing room of 30ft by 18ft. Towards the end of the eighteenth century the house was occupied by the optician and optical instrument maker Peter Dollond. Subsequent residents included many City businessmen.¹²

John Ashlin, a corn factor with a wharf in Upper Thames Street and an Irish estate in County Cork, died at Rush Hill House in 1829. It was then

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occupied for some years by John Harvey, a banker and railway promoter, whose daughter in 1837 married Ashlin's youngest son. At this period the house had ten acres, mostly on the other side of the road. But by 1872 new housing was rapidly closing in, and Rush Hill was offered for sale as equally suitable for occupation or as 'a favourable opportunity for carrying on successful building operations'.¹³

Building duly went ahead, with Rush Hill Terrace in Lavender Hill, and a new street, Rush Hill Road (see page ###). However, the core of the house, with a drastically reduced garden, survived many years more, latterly as 63 Lavender Hill. The last occupant of the still supposedly 'commanding' residence (in fact wedged in behind shops in Lavender Hill) was a wine merchant's widow, who died there in 1886.¹⁴ The property was put up for sale in 1887 and subsequently redeveloped with the L-shaped Crombie Mews, the east-west arm of which occupies the site of the house.

Combe, Linden and Ashley Lodges

The three houses known by the late nineteenth century as Combe, Linden and Ashley Lodges belonged to one estate but were built at different times. The oldest, Linden Lodge, is indicated, with outbuildings, on Corris's map of 1787. In 1790 this 'neat red brick house' was known as Lavender Hall and occupied by a former Royal Navy surgeon, Christopher Rideout, who died there at the end of that year. By the turn of the century the property was in the possession of Henry Knowles, a Borough hop merchant. He built Ashley Lodge, probably around 1800, and lived there until his death in 1802. Meanwhile the older house, now called Lavender Lodge, was let to John Kesterton, a livery-stable proprietor also in the Borough, who lived there until 1820.¹⁵ Knowles left Ashley Lodge to his unmarried daughter Margaret, and Lavender or Linden Lodge to his daughter Mary, the wife of Samuel Sandford

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Still, another hop merchant and an amateur engineer and inventor. At this time, the Stills seem to have been living across the road at the house later known as Elsinore Lodge, whence they moved to Linden Lodge. Combe Lodge seems to have been added alongside around 1832, and all three houses were in Margaret's ownership when she died in 1836.¹⁶ The estate remained intact until put up for sale for redevelopment.

Later residents of Ashley Lodge included William Langdon (d.1871), engineer and long-time employee of Boulton & Watt, who lived there with his large family and several servants for several years before his death; and the architect George Devey, in the 1880s, as his last home.¹⁷ Combe Lodge was first occupied by Richard Evered (d.1833), a brass founder in Drury Lane. By 1861 it was in the occupation of his son (also Richard), his successor as head of Richard Evered & Son, makers of tubes, bedsteads, curtain rods and other fittings, with a factory in Birmingham.

Combe, Linden and Ashley Lodges were sold for redevelopment in the early 1890s and their sites built over with housing in Thirsk and Longbeach Roads (page ###). Combe (restyled Coombe) Lodge survived for some years as development took place around it. Among its last occupants were two comedians, Maitland Marler, subsequently an early film actor, and Miss Nellie Marler.¹⁸

North side

John Sewell's estate

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Gravel Pit Field, an enclosure of over 13½ acres at the west end of Lavender Hill, was acquired by John Sewell in two portions in 1781 and 1783 from Philip Worlidge, who had bought the ground from Earl Spencer in 1763.¹⁹ The improvement of the land and creation of the house there known as Sewell's Folly – the term was Sewell's – appear to have occupied the new owner for many years up to his death in 1802. By the time he died the little estate was 'among the best cultivated and most fruitful' in the vicinity (perhaps due in part to his linseed-oil fertilizer). Ten years after his death, a second house, later called The Chestnuts, was built on the southern part of the ground.

Sewell's old house was renamed Abingdon Lodge by its principal Victorian occupant, Benjamin Edgington, after his home town. **Abingdon Cottage** was the name given to a smaller house built on part of the grounds north-east of Sewell's Folly about 1826. This was the home in the 1830s of George Hughes, son of Joseph Hughes, the Baptist minister of Battersea Chapel. A later occupant here in the 1850s was Charles Lockey, vicar-choral at St Paul's Cathedral, a celebrated tenor admired by Mendelssohn.²⁰

The northern part of the Abingdon Lodge estate was mostly lost to the London & Southampton Railway in the 1830s. This left a detached triangular remnant at the north-west corner where a small cottage was built fronting Falcon Lane, leased by successive tenants of The Chestnuts. Another swathe was taken for the West London Extension line (opened 1863), obliterating Abingdon Cottage and bringing the railway close to the main house. A few years later Abingdon Lodge itself was swept away for the London & North Western Railway's Falcon Lane goods depot (vol. 49). After many years of uncertainty the former depot site in turn gave way in the mid 1980s to redevelopment with supermarkets and car parking, served by a new road (Falcon Lane) parallel to Mossbury Road, based on an old way through the depot, after which it took its name.²¹

Sewell's Folly. John Sewell, a man of scientific interests and some whimsicality, was the co-owner and editor of the *European Magazine*, a publication in which he found space from time to time for items relating to Battersea. But he was principally a bookseller, and his Cornhill shop became a meeting place for important City businessmen. It was there too that the early meetings were held of the Society for the Improvement of Naval Architecture, a patriotic research group set up in 1791 at Sewell's instigation to remedy the deficiencies of English shipbuilding. In keeping with his mildly eccentric persona, Sewell is said to have put up a notice on his fence at Lavender Hill offering a half-guinea to the first person to cause any damage there: only for a simpleton to turn up at his shop and ask for the money, having demolished both the palings and a wooden seat where the notice was.²² But Sewell's Folly was perhaps less a piece of whimsy than a genuinely experimental structure. Its appearance is known from a watercolour by J. M. W. Turner, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1801 and now known as 'London: Autumnal Morning', and an engraving published in the *European Magazine* in 1803, which Sewell had had prepared for posthumous publication (Ill. 10.3). The editorial speaks of the 'laborious attention' given by him to the Folly's 'erection and preservation', and his great expense in bringing it 'to its present state' – remarks suggesting that the unconventional edifice was still a work in progress when he died. Another account, apparently written around 1790, describes the Folly as then in the course of construction. The building was designed to take advantage of the site's sharp fall to the north and the distant views, having a 'prospect room', a railed gallery on one or more sides and a flat projecting roof surmounted by a belvedere. How the house was constructed is unclear, though it had vaulted cellars, presumably of brick. It was faced externally in pasteboard, coated with sand-textured paint to resemble stone, and had no lath-and-plaster work inside; instead the rooms were 'curiously finished with polished fir framing' and stucco panels.²³ The ground plan of Abingdon Lodge drawn by the Ordnance Survey some

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seventy years later shows the survival of the two original blocks comprising Sewell's Folly. By then the main building had been extended, and had probably lost its flat roof, but there is the suggestion of a terrace or gallery alongside, presumably deriving from the feature shown in the 1803 view. The belvedere was perhaps the observatory from which one occupant, Arthur Baily, studied the night sky through his 5ft telescope, including the moon's occultation of Aldebaran in 1829. The house was later owned and occupied by Benjamin Edgington until 1865 when it was sold for railway development. Edgington was a manufacturer of marquees and tents, with a factory in the Borough and a shop in Piccadilly, and in 1859 regaled 200 local schoolchildren with tea in a 'spacious canvas hall' on the lawn to celebrate his daughter's wedding.²⁴

The Chestnuts. In 1808, six years after Sewell's death, his estate was sold by his devisees to George Delavand, secretary to the Customs Commissioners. It was presumably on a lease from Delavand of the southern portion of Sewell's grounds that the mathematician and economist Ephraim Gompertz built the house later called The Chestnuts, to designs by David Laing, who had local connections and may have lived at Balham (Ill. 10.5). In his published book of designs, Laing referred to the villa's situation 'on a beautiful eminence, forming part of a healthful spot of ground; commanding good home views from every aspect'.²⁵ Although approached from Lavender Hill and standing close to the road, the house had its front door on the west side (facing Falcon Road), in accord with the consensus of 'all who have considered the subject of aspects'. The house is built of brownish brick, with yellow brick flat arches over the openings and matching quoins, under a hipped slated roof. In its original form it was planned around a central hallway, with a U-shaped staircase at the end.

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Gompertz left in 1821. The house was thereafter occupied until his death in 1870 by James Bogle Smith, who held various directorships in banking and insurance and traded on his own account as a West India merchant – in which last connection he received substantial compensation for freed slaves. Locally, he acted as a trustee of Sir Walter St John's School.²⁶

Bogle Smith's family was succeeded at the house in 1872 by Arthur Stirling, a well-known actor, and his wife Fanny: not, as repeatedly stated, by the actress Fanny Stirling and her playwright husband Edward Lambert.²⁷ One of Stirling's roles was Robert Audley in *Lady Audley's Secret*, and the couple's story has something of a sensation novel flavour. The well-off daughter of a mill-owner, Mrs Stirling had several children by a previous marriage, who stood to inherit substantial fortunes. In 1874 Stirling petitioned for divorce on the grounds of her adultery, at The Chestnuts and elsewhere, and as the family's break-up threatened, legal action was taken against him to safeguard the step-children's future. While the divorce case proceeded, Mrs Stirling was living in St Leonard's-on-Sea, close to her former home, where she died before judgement could be made, from 'exhaustion of the brain' and epilepsy. Six months later, Stirling married Louisa Viner, an actress he had worked with years before, who had a notable success as Lady Isabel, the tragic heroine of *East Lynne*.²⁸

By the time Stirling moved away the house had been systematically modernized. Though still comprising only ground and first floors (plus wine and coal cellars), it had been extended first by Bogle Smith and then again by the Stirlings in 1872. As described in 1880, the house contained two principal reception rooms, with a library and a billiard room opening on to the garden. There were nine bedrooms, nurseries, a bathroom and five WCs, numerous service rooms and outbuildings. Though the grounds were mainly laid out with lawns, walks, shrubberies and ornamental trees – and no doubt chestnuts – the northern part of the site, screened from Abingdon Lodge by a

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brick wall, included a three-stall stable and three coach-houses, hen houses, a cow-house, piggeries and forcing houses. The house itself was completely covered by wistaria, roses and other flowering climbers.²⁹

By 1887 The Chestnuts estate had been acquired by Alfred Heaver, who oversaw its redevelopment with Mossbury Road and Queen's Parade. The house itself was incorporated into the business premises of the ironmonger G. F. Darby, the building lessee of Queen's Parade (page ##). It remained in commercial or industrial use until 1986, and in 1987 was converted once again to residential use (architect, Mark Goldstein).³⁰

Gravel Close

The ground bought by Thomas Barry from early Spencer in 1765 comprised several fields on either side of Lavender Hill. Barry's main business was seemingly in hops, his son's trade, and in his will he mentions warehouses at Maze Pond in Southwark, which he had rebuilt, as well as a house and malthouse at Kingston upon Thames.³¹ His Lavender Hill estate was probably bought as a speculation, as he soon began to dispose of parts of it. The ground included the whole of the northern frontage apart from Gravel Pit Field (above) and at least half of the southern, much of the latter ground extending as far as Clapham Common (see Chapter 13). East of Gravel Pit Field up to Pig Hill Lane footpath (the precursor of Latchmere Road) were the 15½ acres comprising Gravel Close. It was close to the road at the south-west corner of Gravel Close, directly opposite the site of the future Lavender Sweep, that Barry built the house called the White House.

Shortly after making his will in 1770, Barry sold Gravel Close, with the White House, to Francis Moore, a Cheapside linen draper. Moore failed to pay up, and the deal was still unresolved when Barry died later that year.

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Negotiations followed with Barry's widow, as did a Chancery suit brought by Moore. In the end Moore was required to pay Mrs Barry's legal costs and sell his property at auction in order to raise money to honour his purchase agreement. The episode seems typical of Moore, a difficult and litigious man but an inventive thinker who believed that prices were inflated because of the economy's over-reliance on horses. He proposed a return to ploughing with oxen, inventing a new wheeled plough for the purpose, and also devising both self-propelling (presumably steam-powered) vehicles and experimental horse-drawn 'carts' with outsized wheels for high efficiency. One of these may have helped inspire the Hansom cab.³²

Gravel Close was now sold in three broad strips, and although they soon returned to single ownership, these divisions continued to inform the development of the ground. The first lot, comprising the White House with its garden and four acres of land behind, seems to have been purchased by someone named Marsh – perhaps the Samuel Marsh who owned property at Battersea Rise. The other two, each of five acres, were sold respectively to John Evans, gentleman, of Tooting Graveney, and John Church of Temple Bar. Church soon sold on to Evans, who bought up Marsh's ground too. It was probably Evans who was responsible for building a semi-detached pair of houses on the easternmost of the three lots, referred to as newly built in a deed of March 1778, in which he was described as a merchant of Pudding Lane. In the nineteenth century these houses became known as Normanby House and The Firs.³³

The reunified estate did not remain so for long. By the time he died in 1784, Evans had disposed of most of the ground, retaining just the freehold of the White House site, which was now occupied by four houses and called Mount Pleasant (see below). In 1786 the eastern two-thirds of the Gravel Close property passed into the hands of James Taylor, a hatter of Tower Hill, and was to stay with his family for about a century until the 1870s, when part was

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sold off. The remainder was redeveloped some years later with Dorothy and Kathleen Roads.³⁴

Normanby House and The Firs. The eastern of John Evans's houses (the future Firs) was occupied in March 1778 by Titus Wilson, a grocer in Bridge Street, Westminster. The future Normanby House was then empty. Its first recorded occupant was Mary Burnell, of Winkburn in Nottinghamshire, who seems to have acquired Evans's estate from his mortgagees. Possibly she stayed at Lavender Hill with her god-daughter, Elizabeth Belt. Mrs Burnell died in 1784, and in her will directed that the Lavender Hill estate should be sold, and that Elizabeth should have the furniture and other contents of her own house there, but not the pictures. The tone of her will, and the disputatious nature of some surviving correspondence, suggest an imperious, quarrelsome character with a strong sense of her place in the social hierarchy – not someone obviously suited to suburban Lavender Hill.³⁵

The two houses, though semi-detached, stood in grounds of differing extent, The Firs having a relatively narrow strip of ground. Possibly there had been some thought of building another pair west of Normanby House, but this was never done. Advertised for sale after Mrs Burnell's death, the houses did not immediately sell. The aged Titus Wilson put the short lease of his villa up for sale in 1789, and moved with his wife into lodgings in Clapham, where he died not long afterwards.³⁶

Wilson's old house was later occupied on a new 80-year lease by Thomas Hawes, merchant, and his sister, Sarah, members of a Lambeth soap-making family, and siblings to the philanthropist and physician William Hawes. Thomas Hawes died in 1849, and Sarah continued to live at The Firs until her own death in 1866. By 1867 the architect Edward I'Anson had secured a 21-year lease of The Firs, apparently selling or subletting that same

year to Jonathan Carr, woollen warehouseman, who lived there with his family and their six or seven servants.³⁷ His sons, Jonathan Thomas Carr and Joseph William Comyns Carr, had not yet entered on their respective careers as property developer (and promoter of Bedford Park) and art critic. But as Jonathan continued to live at The Firs until his marriage in 1873, he was presumably alert to the Artizans', Labourers', & General Dwellings Company's housing scheme at Shaftesbury Park, then in progress near by. This was one of the smaller villas of Lavender Hill, but the 1871 census lists 20 individuals there, including visitors. The Firs under Jonathan Carr senior offered open house to those seeking shelter, notably a succession of political refugees including Garibaldi's son Ricciotti, Kossuth's friend Ferenc Pulszky, and Camille Barrère. Later in the 1870s, it became a 'Maison d'Education pour Demoiselles', but by 1881 was uninhabited and awaiting demolition.³⁸

After Mrs Burnell's death, meanwhile, the future Normanby House adjoining was long occupied until the mid 1820s by James Langdale, a distiller. Langdale spent his last years abroad, having let the house to Corbyn Lloyd, a Lombard Street banker of the famous Quaker family. Lloyd had been involved with other Friends in a spirited but unsuccessful attempt in 1815 to stop the execution of a servant girl, Elizabeth Fenning, convicted of murder by means of poisoned dumplings. He died at the house in 1828. The house was occupied for many years by members of the Gurney family, 'England's great stenographic dynasty'. It was demolished in the 1880s and the site covered by Kathleen Road.³⁹

Highbury House and Woodham Lodge. The western half of James Taylor's Gravel Close estate remained vacant until 1797, when a large house was erected there on lease by John Harrison. This was to become Highbury House; the name was not in use until the mid nineteenth century, and its significance is not known. Neither is Harrison's identity. Within a few years it came into

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the occupation of John Alden Clarke, a partner in the City banking house of Lubbock, Forster & Company.⁴⁰

Set back from the road, and screened by a brick wall and folding gates, Highbury House was a broad, relatively shallow house, containing 'numerous' bedrooms, with boudoirs and dressing rooms. After Clarke, who died in 1833, occupants of Highbury House included Moses Levy, a government contractor (1851), and Frederick Wyndham Payne, a wine merchant in St James's Street. Payne eventually bought the freehold, in 1877, and had a lodge built at the entrance on Lavender Hill, employing the architect George Mayhew, of Mayhew & Knight.⁴¹

By 1889 Highbury House had been acquired by the London & North Western Railway to enlarge its Falcon Lane goods depot. The house remained, standing in much reduced grounds, and by 1896 had been let to The English High Schools Ltd as the Felix Educational Institute, offering 'no-success, no-fee' tuition to Civil Service examinees. It was subsequently demolished and the site redeveloped with Battersea Post and District Sorting Office.⁴²

About 1808 Clarke built a house similar in scale to his own residence on the ground east of Highbury House, taking a long lease from James Taylor. At the time of his death the house was let to James Norris, a stockbroker, who later moved to Spencer Lodge (page ###). The house was subsequently occupied by George Ellis, attorney (1840s-50s); the name Woodham Lodge was in use by 1860 when the then occupant, William Batty, solicitor to the County Fire and Provident Life offices, died.⁴³

A rather garbled account of Lavender Hill by J. H. Brady, published in 1838, identifies John Alden Clarke's residence (Highbury House) and two others 'whimsically surmounted by turrets, and with fanciful stabling in

front'. These presumably refer to Woodham Lodge, which was indeed occupied as two residences by 1841 and which may have appeared to be a pair of houses from its broad, symmetrical front. All three houses, he asserts, were built by Clarke. Woodham Lodge, remembered as 'a large house with a castellated plaster parapet', seems to have been the house at Lavender Hill described in 1813 as owned or occupied by the roman cement manufacturer Charles Francis, appropriately rendered in cement of 'a fair lavender color' (Ill. 10.6).⁴⁴

Mount Pleasant. When the purchaser of Gravel Close, John Evans, died in 1784, his executors sold his residence and other property at Tooting, along with ground rents secured on 'four substantial Brick Dwelling Houses' and other outbuildings at 'Battersea Rise', on the road to Wandsworth. Probably at least one of the houses had been the White House, and the rest were built in its grounds; they were certainly on the same site, and were evidently the speculation of George Wilson, a bricklayer in the City, who in 1775 advertised them as at 'Mount Pleasant, near Lavender-Hill'. One he described as 'a small but neat' country house with 'very fine Prospects', available for 20 guineas a year, with a coach-house and stable if wanted. In other notices he drew attention to the 'very pretty' gardens, and the fact that 'four Stage Coaches pass and repass Six Times every Day, by the Door'. Three years later Wilson went bankrupt, and in 1779 his assignees put the Mount Pleasant estate, held on a lease with 46 years to run, up for sale. By 1800 the property appears to have been in the possession of a man called Connop, and it was subsequently owned by Henry Heylyn, a dyer, and his descendants.⁴⁵

The four houses stood in a row, two small properties flanked by larger ones. In the late 1830s and early 40s the two western houses were occupied as one, by a woman of independent means, Mrs Lucy Vernon, her nine children and several servants. The name Mount Pleasant did not survive long, and in

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the nineteenth century as the individual houses did not have names they were numbered from the west 1–4 Lavender Hill; they later became Nos 184–190, and finally 222–228.

At the easternmost house (No. 4) the longest-term resident was Thomas Parkes, a hop factor. He sold up when much of the ground was taken by the railway in 1867. The items he disposed of suggest a countrified way of life: an Alderney cow and heifer, a lady's saddle horse, pigs, Dorking fowls, hurdles and brewing and dairy equipment. The house was later occupied by a GP, Frederick Hunter, who in 1881 had a lodge-like extension built on to the side and front, comprising a surgery, consulting room and covered entrance to the house proper, designed by Leane & Bakewell of Queen Anne's Gate, who were principally civil engineers.⁴⁶

The other, larger house (No. 1) was occupied in the mid-to-late nineteenth century by Matthew Whiting, a tanner (brother of Henry Whiting), who had grown up at Lavender Lodge off Lavender Sweep (page ##). He eventually acquired the whole Mount Pleasant site from the Heylyn family, and following his death in 1902 there was an attempt by his trustees to redevelop the ground with shops fronting Lavender Hill and a warehouse or depository on the backland.⁴⁷ This came to nothing, and the site was sold and redeveloped with the Electric Pavilion cinema (vol. 49).

Robert Bremner's estate

In February 1777 the London music publisher Robert Bremner offered five guineas for the return of his gold watch, lost 'between the two-Houses' at Lavender Hill.⁴⁸ The curious phrase referred to a pair of recently built detached houses belonging to Bremner and probably built for him, on the north side of Lavender Hill, standing in present-day terms between

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Latchmere Road and Town Hall Road. The eastern house was much later called Elm House, its counterpart remaining apparently nameless until its demolition. Bremner's property, consisting chiefly of the Lavender Hill houses, a small estate in Brighton and his music shop in the Strand, was put up for sale on his death at Kensington Gore in 1789. The ground between the two houses, 'peculiarly well adapted for building on', was soon occupied by a matching pair of houses. Bremner's Lavender Hill property was described as freehold when he died, but the westernmost house may not have been, and certainly belonged to Earl Spencer by the 1870s, when it was sold by him to the tenant, Henry Whiting (below). The easternmost house was put up for sale in 1802, together with the new pair. It is probable that the new houses had been built for a Benjamin Shaw, who lived at one of them (later called Cedar House) and whose furniture was sold at the same time.⁴⁹

The purchaser of the future Cedar House, if not the whole of Shaw's estate, was Jonathan Sparrow, an ironmonger in West Smithfield, who lived there until 1816. The house, described in 1802 as of two storeys with three rooms on each floor, was subsequently let to various tenants, before becoming the home of Sparrow's daughter and her husband Edward Crowley; Mrs Crowley, latterly a widow, stayed there until she died in 1868. Like Sparrow, Crowley seems to have been involved in the iron business, and was probably a member of the great Northumbrian iron and steel-making family behind the firm of Crowley, Millington & Company. He was deputy chairman of the London and Brighton Railway, and active in other railway and insurance companies.⁵⁰

The matching house next door was leased and occupied until his death there in 1847 by John Matthew, a man of independent means. It acquired its name Elsinore Lodge through the residence there in the 1870s of a Danish merchant in colonial produce, Preben Lihme.⁵¹

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Cedar House and Elsinore Lodge were put up for sale in 1890 following the death of Edward Crowley's son, Jonathan Sparrow Crowley. Both were still occupied at respectable rents (£100 and £130), but the two-acre property was now clearly more valuable for house-building.⁵² They were pulled down for the development of Theatre Street.

Elm House was described in 1802 as smaller than the adjoining pair, 'but equally delightful'; not long after its demolition towards the end of the century it was remembered as 'a nice roomy, old-fashioned house'. It was owned for most of the nineteenth century by a family named Greenwood, from Barnsley or with Barnsley connections. It passed from James Greenwood, a hop merchant in the Borough, to his brother Samuel, and then to their niece Mary Anne Greenwood, who had lived with them. In 1847 she married the stockbroker John Charles McMullen, their widowed near-neighbour at the other of Robert Bremner's houses.⁵³

In 1860 Elm House was let to Nassau John Senior, son of the economist Nassau Senior, and his wife Jane (Jeanie), sister of the writer Thomas Hughes. For the next sixteen years Elm House was the centre of Mrs Senior's family and progressive circle, visited by distinguished friends including Thackeray, G. F. Watts, and Octavia Hill. The move was made for the sake of Mrs Senior's health, and although suffering from the cancer that eventually killed her she now threw herself into social work. Locally she helped impoverished labouring families living in cottages or shacks below Lavender Hill, and in 1865 she drew the bad state of the Falcon brook sewer to public attention through a letter to *The Times* (using her husband's name to ensure publication).⁵⁴

Forty years later Thackeray's daughter, Anny Thackeray Ritchie, recalled Elm House in those days:

the long, low drawing-room, with its big bow-window opening to a garden full of gay parterres, where lawns ran to the distant boundary, while beyond again lay a far-away horizon. It was not the sea that one saw spreading before one's eyes, but the vast plateau of London, with its drifting vapours and its ripple of house-tops flowing to meet the sky-line. The room itself was pleasant, sunny, and well-worn. There were old rugs spread on the stained floors (they were not as yet in fashion as they are now); many pictures were hanging on the walls; a varied gallery, good and indifferent; ... and then, besides the pictures, there was a sense of music in the air, and of flowers, and of more flowers.⁵⁵

The Seniors were succeeded at Elm House by a solicitor, Frederick William Steward. He was probably the last occupant of the house, which was finally acquired as the site of Battersea Town Hall.⁵⁶

The counterpart to Elm House at the west end of the row of four (latterly 174 Lavender Hill) is shown in Corris's survey of 1787 under the name Lloyd – recorded in the ratebooks as Samuel or James Lloyd. By 1841 J. C. McMullen was in occupation, but he moved to Clapham Rise on his marriage to Mary Anne Greenwood, and the house was then let to a wealthy silk merchant, Henry Whiting, one of the three sons of Matthew Whiting of Lavender Lodge, Lavender Sweep (page ##). He lived there until his death in 1894 with his French wife, Juliette. Whiting was a notable philanthropist, 'a man who delighted to do good by stealth', giving very substantial sums to hospitals, charities and good causes generally, and in particular to policemen and their families.⁵⁷ Percy Thornton recalled 'the little house on Lavender Hill, where so many celebrated people congregated'. In 1872 Whiting acquired the freehold from Earl Spencer. His widow continued to live at the house until she died, when it was sold to James Restler, engineer to the Southwark & Vauxhall Water Company. The house was pulled down about 1903 for the

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building of Shakespeare Parade in Lavender Hill and flats in Latchmere Road.⁵⁸

Lavender Lodge

A little way east of Elm House stood a squarish house in a long, narrow garden, built on lease from the Graham family about the mid 1830s by Richard Puddick, a man of independent means, for his own use. It was later occupied by the silk merchant Henry Whiting, who moved to the future 174 Lavender Hill about 1848. The house was known successively between 1851 and 1881 as Lavender Cottage, House, Villa and Lodge, and the last name stuck. During that time successive residents included a wine merchant, clergyman, Lancashire textile manufacturer, stockbroker and antique-furniture dealer, while the site itself became sandwiched between the back gardens of terraced houses in Eland and Glycena Roads. No. 148 Lavender Hill, as it became, was the home from 1907 of Charles McDade, Medical Officer of Wandsworth Union. It survived long into the twentieth century, latterly converted to use as part of a garage and filling station (Ill. 10.4). The site is now occupied by flats.⁵⁹

Lavender Hill Nursery

East of Lavender Lodge was a larger house with larger grounds, variously known as Glycena (originally Glycine) House, Lodge or Villa. This was built around 1826 for William Pamplin as part of his new Lavender Hill Nursery, which replaced his old premises in the smokier environment of King's Road, Chelsea. The new property was rented from Elizabeth Graham, who owned much land in the area, the house itself standing on part of her estate once known as Sun Hill. Pamplin's house was named after the Chinese wistaria

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(*Glycine sinensis*), a plant introduced to England ten years earlier, which he trained against its walls.⁶⁰

By 1828 Pamplin was advertising for sale sundry evergreens, trained fruit trees, and seeds. In addition to this humdrum business, his son and assistant William continued to build up his collection there of 'curious' British plants and exotica, already begun at Chelsea. Pamplin junior's local explorations, on his own or with the botanist and bookseller Alexander Irvine, resulted in his *Catalogue of the Rarer Species of Indigenous Plants ... growing in the Vicinity of Battersea and Clapham*, published in 1827. Three years later he announced his plan to set up as a bookseller at the nursery, 'supplying the wants of botanists and collectors of *old* books in this department, at a moderate expense'. The business was in part a mail-order operation, for he particularly had in mind provincial buyers who could not get to London easily.⁶¹

In 1840 he married and moved with his bookselling business to Soho. When old Mr Pamplin died in 1844 the nursery came to an end and the site was given up. As well as the evergreens and fruit trees, the stock put up for sale included forest trees, pollard willows, shrubs, American and hardy herbaceous plants, camellias, 'very rare' ferns, growing crops including mangel-wurzel and turnip, and thousands of yards of box edging.⁶²

William junior's older sisters Harriet and Sarah seem to have run a school at Glycena House, advertising in 1838 for a lady to teach landscape drawing, Italian and arithmetic in a 'select establishment' then numbering just seven pupils. After the nursery was sold they set up home with their young niece a little way west at one of the houses at Mount Pleasant, working for many years as daily governesses.⁶³

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In 1851 Glycena House was in the occupation of an iron merchant and his brother, but by 1870 was in the hands of John Pearman, a solicitor, who renamed it Drayton House (after Drayton near Chaddesley Corbett, Worcestershire, where he was born), and oversaw the redevelopment of the site as Glycena Road in the 1880s.⁶⁴

Lavender Place

Lavender Place was the name of a row of houses at the east end of Lavender Hill, originally all in Clapham parish. Laundering was well established there by 1819, when E. Smith at No. 6 advertised for work, offering references from families for whom she had washed 'for more than 7 years'. The cottages making up most of Lavender Place were probably built not long before, some at least on a lease of 99 years from 1815 granted to the builder John Loat by James Brogden.⁶⁵ A drawing of 1848 shows the four pairs of semi-detached cottages comprising 1-8 Lavender Place, with the sign of John Shillito, tailor, at No. 8 (Ill. 10.2). This house and its pair, part of Loat's leasehold, were demolished for the making of Queen's (now Queenstown) Road around 1864. East of this was a row of about a dozen cottages at right angles to the road, called Lavender Row, and another couple of houses in Lavender Place, the last, No. 10, being the Crown and Anchor, a beerhouse for at least part of its history: local inhabitants objected to its having a full licence.⁶⁶

Lavender Row (or Cottages) stood roughly on the site of Cedar Terrace on the east side of Queenstown Road. The cottages are not shown on the Clapham tithe map of 1838 but were probably built soon afterwards. Together with Lavender Place they made up what seems to have been a fairly rough neighbourhood, inhabited mainly by labourers, including a few at Beaufoy's acetic acid works, and gardeners, presumably working at the nearby market gardens and nurseries. The laundresses seem to have been confined to the

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better houses in Lavender Place; Lavender Row was latterly described as ‘a nest of miserable hovels’ run up for brickmakers and later let to ‘others whose moral characters did not stand particularly high’, for which reason it had acquired the nickname Botany Bay.⁶⁷ In the late 1870s the houses west of Queenstown Road in Lavender Place were adapted to make a continuous terrace of shops, heralding the general development of the Beaufoy estate.

Since the late Nineteenth Century

In the course of about twenty years, from the late 1860s until the late 1880s, the settled residential calm and secluding greenery of Lavender Hill gave way to a high-street frenzy of shops, traffic and crowded pavements. As new houses filled the frontages, the handful of private carriage drives or old paths were replaced by side-streets, climbing or descending to new neighbourhoods of smaller streets and small terraced houses.

Among the factors which shaped the new developments were the fragmented pattern of landownership on both sides of the road, and the fact that much land on the south side belonged to large houses on Clapham Common. On the north side, the developers’ advance came from the east, with the building over of land which had never been taken for villa residences, notably Beaufoy’s chemical works and the former nursery and market-garden ground to its west. Development close to the later Queenstown Road crossroads was relatively low class, but showed a progression from the Wandsworth Road on the other side, which by the early 1880s was acquiring ‘very much the appearance of the Walworth and other busy roads of that class ... it is only when Lavender Hill is approached that the houses and trade have a more pretentious character’.⁶⁸ Estate owners here

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were generally under no illusions as to the appropriate level of building, laying out quite closely packed streets with small houses on short plots. Further west, the proximity of genteel villa residences encouraged better-class development on Edward I'Anson's ground. There as in many aspiring suburban developments, builders or occupants adopted house-names which the sheer number and uniformity of the buildings made impracticable as addresses. The presence of the large Shaftesbury Park estate, the much-vaunted 'Workmen's City', could not fail to check social ambitions in immediately adjacent streets, but even Shaftesbury Park had a quota of intended middle-class dwellings, ranging from superior terraced houses to detached, lightly Gothic villas.

The wider district of Lavender Hill that emerged in the late nineteenth century was far from homogeneous and for many years the contrasts thrown up by the process of transition must have been glaring. As old-time residents died off or moved away, where the large villas survived they were likely to be taken by doctors or educational establishments, and did not sink into multi-occupation as flats or lodging-houses. In the early 1880s, though much potential building space remained, a fundamental division was already obvious:

Lavender Hill is somewhat curiously divided into two neighbourhoods. That on the right-hand and lower side, reaching towards Battersea, is ... of a somewhat poorer character; while that on the left-hand of Clapham Common side is very much more aristocratic.⁶⁹

Apart from Essex & Company's wallpaper factory, and one or two steam laundries, there was little further industrial development. Beaufoy's acetic acid works closed down early in the twentieth century. It took some years for Lavender Hill's potential as a shopping street to become apparent. On Henry Townsend's estate in the 1860s some houses were built with shops

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from the start, but others, notably in Seymour Terrace, were not, though they were soon converted. Seymour Terrace was advertized in 1877 as being in 'one of the best business neighbourhoods in or near London'. The high-class pretension of the Seymour Terrace shops was announced by an ornamental ironwork arcade and awning along the pavement.⁷⁰ Edward I'Anson maintained a residential front to most of his estate, as did John Pearman on his smaller property adjoining, but as the villas east of I'Anson's Eland Road fell to developers in the 1880s the nearness of Clapham Junction made the building of more shops inevitable, for example: Commercial Buildings on Henry Corsellis's Lavender Hill estate, and Queen's Parade on Alfred Heaver's Chestnuts estate, wrapping round the junction with Falcon Road. There would have been more, but for the competing demands of public and municipal bodies and commercial enterprises which made Clapham Junction and the west end of Lavender Hill the new centre of urban Battersea, superseding the old village centre near the parish church. In the space of a few years, western Lavender Hill acquired town hall, public library, main post office, police station, magistrates' court, telephone exchange, theatre, cinema and department store. With the many new shops here the Metropolitan Board of Works and then the London County Council were concerned to keep the building line well back, allowing ground-floor extensions to creep only a few feet further, and requiring some frontage to be given up to widen the pavements.

Occupiers of the old houses protested in vain as the residential character of the road gave way to shops and their forecourts became sandwiched between the new buildings. On the side streets north of Lavender Hill, developers stuck to the traditional suburban model of mostly two-storey terraces, but as almost the last villa sites came up for redevelopment in the early twentieth century built more appropriate blocks of low-rise flats: Albert Bussell in Theatre Street and John Jenkins in Latchmere Road. Building on the south side was more mixed, with small houses predominating towards the

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east, and flats and substantial middle-class houses, terraced or semi-detached, towards Clapham Junction.

Lavender Hill as it existed at the start of the Second World War was almost entirely Victorian or Edwardian. There was considerable bomb damage, notable losses including the Edwardian post office, but not enough to call for extensive area reconstruction. The chief post-war redevelopments are at either end of Lavender Hill on the north side, neither dictated by bombing: the ASDA supermarket and car park at Clapham Junction, chiefly a redevelopment of Falcon Lane goods depot; and council housing at the east end, replacing mid-to-late Victorian housing on the Beaufoy and Townsend estates.